

Old Sleuth Library

OLD SLEUTH, BADGER & CO.
By OLD SLEUTH.

A SERIES OF THE MOST THRILLING DETECTIVE STORIES EVER PUBLISHED.

No. 59.

{ SINGLE
NUMBER. }

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Nos. 17 to 27 VANDEWATER STREET, NEW YORK.

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Vol. III.

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BY OLD SLEUTH.

CHAPTER I.

"Is you will not aid him, sir, it only remains for me to die!"

The great Sleuth was sitting in his library. There came a ring at his door-bell, and a few moments later a sweet-faced girl was ushered into the great detective's presence. In the manner peculiar to himself, the noted criminal-taker glanced at her, and in that one glance read as much as most men would learn in an hour. The fair visitor appeared to be laboring under great distress and excitement, and for a moment could not speak. She was trembling; her lips moved, but there came no sound.

In his kindly and reassuring manner the detective said:

"Take a seat, miss, and calm yourself. Do not fear; I will listen to all you have to say. I am in no hurry, and you need not be."

The girl took a seat. She was plainly dressed and very pretty, and hers was a fine face. She was evidently a girl well educated and possessed of great natural force of character.

"We have had pleasant weather," said the detective.

The girl managed to articulate:

"Yes, sir."

"Shall I give you a glass of wine? You appear fatigued."

"I am not fatigued, sir. I am much obliged. I do not need any wine; I never drink it."

The detective smiled and said:

"I never recommend it only as a medicine, and it is much better when one can get along without it."

Sleuth was merely talking so as to enable his visitor to recover her composure, and he kept on talking about one thing and another until he succeeded, so that the girl talked quite easily, and then he said:

"Now tell me the nature of your business. Do not be afraid; I will listen, and you can confide fully in me."

"I am a teacher in a public school, sir."
"Ah, yes; a very honorable vocation."

"I am an orphan, sir."
"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir; I am very unfortunate. I do not know that I have a living relative in the world. My father was a professor in a college. He died when I was about eleven years old; my mother

had died some years previously. I was educated through a scholarship that was awarded to me through the influence of the president of the college, and when I graduated from the Normal School and obtained my certificate, I came to New York, and through the influence of the college faculty secured a position as teacher in the New York schools."

"You are very young to teach."

"I am past twenty, sir."

"Indeed?"

"And now, sir, I will tell you my story. Oh, I am so unfortunate! A few months after my arrival in New York I made the acquaintance of a young man."

A shadow fell over the great thief-taker's face; but he made no comment, and the girl proceeded:

"After a few months this young man commenced to visit me regularly, and we are now engaged to be married; but—"

The girl stopped short.

"Proceed," said the detective.

"Oh, sir!" the girl ejaculated, and again remained silent.

"Proceed," said Sleuth.

"How can I tell you, sir?"

"Has he deceived you?"

"No, sir—oh, no! He is the soul of honor, and he loves me. We were to be married in two weeks, but now—"

Again the girl stopped.

"Proceed," said the detective.

"Oh, sir, it is so unfortunate! Trouble—a terrible trouble has come upon us."

"Tell me all about it."

"It's terrible!" muttered the girl.

"Why do you not get married? What has come between you?"

"Albert is in jail, sir."

"Who is Albert?"

"The gentleman who was to become my husband."

"His name is Albert?"

"Yes, sir, Albert Gray."

A spasm passed over the sweet face of the girl as she mentioned the name, and her whole face assumed a ghastly hue.

"So you were to marry Albert Gray?"

"Yes, sir."

The detective recognized the name and knew

the circumstances in the case. The confidential clerk of a great firm had robbed the concern of nearly half a million dollars. When the robbery was discovered, and before his arrest, he had committed suicide. After his death papers were found implicating another clerk in the office—a young man named Albert Gray—and pretended proofs were left to indicate that the young man Gray had been the arch-villain. He had not only stolen money outright, but had been guilty of forgery in many instances. Indeed, the case against him was seemingly conclusive. When confronted with an accusation the young man appeared overwhelmed, but in the most earnest manner protested his innocence; but, alas! when his record was hunted up, there was discovered circumstances that were strangely confirmative and corroboratory of the charge.

It was discovered that he had been in another house; that he had been discharged for gambling, and it was also proven that he had been a regular attendant at race-tracks. No proof was obtained that he had previously taken anything that did not belong to him, as his previous employers refused to say, and their refusal left the intimation that he had been dishonest previous to the last disclosure. He had been put under arrest, and every effort had been used to induce him to make a confession, but he sturdily denied his guilt.

Over four hundred thousand dollars in bonds were missing, and it was supposed that the bulk of these bonds were subject to the order of Albert Gray. Propositions had been made previous to his arrest suggesting immunity from prosecution if he would only confess and restore the plunder; but the young man maintained his innocence and denied all knowledge of the crime, and declared he knew nothing about the whereabouts of the plunder, and finally he was put in jail.

It was declared by the officers that he was a young man, and was prepared to go up for a number of years, and then come forth and enjoy his wealth, as others have done.

"But," they added, "in this case we will send him up for so long a term that his stolen wealth will do him no good."

All these facts were known to Sleuth, and they were recalled to him when the girl mentioned the name of Albert Gray.

The detective had not given the circumstances much thought, and in a superficial reading of the testimony he had concluded that the young man was guilty.

He took some time to think the matter over, however, after the girl had made the disclosure of the name, and during the time the girl sat watching his face, and finally he said:

"Miss, I can not see that I can help you," and it was then the girl uttered the exclamation with which we open our narrative:

"If you will not aid him, sir, it only remains for me to die!"

CHAPTER II.

THERE came a sad expression over the detective's face. He waited while the girl struggled to repress the sobs that sought to burst from her.

"Why should you utter this threat against yourself, miss? Would you wish to marry a criminal? Do you not think it fortunate that this disclosure has come before you were his wife? Were you married, you would come under the cloud; now it has passed over you."

"He is not a criminal, sir. He is as innocent as you or I. No, sir; it is a foul conspiracy."

"How do you know he is innocent?"

"He has told me he is innocent."

"Certainly; he would not confess his guilt to you. What is your name?"

"My name is Mary Penham."

"And you think, Mary, that this young man is innocent?"

"I know he is innocent."

"How do you know it?"

"If you were to talk to him, sir, you would be convinced."

"But you forget his record is not good."

"Sir, I know what you mean. Can I tell you the circumstances under which I met this young man?"

"Certainly."

"I was a teacher in an evening school. One night I was on my way home, and I saw a young man walking ahead of me. He staggered, and I knew that he was intoxicated. He fell, and I stood and watched. He did not rise to his feet. I thought he might be dead. I went to him. He looked like one who was dead. I sought to raise him to his feet. An officer came along. The young man recovered consciousness, and, to a certain extent, his fall had sobered him. When the officer raised him, he said to me:

"Will you take him straight home? Otherwise I will be compelled to take him in." I knew that meant an arrest, and I said:

"I will take him home." I offered the young man my arm, and as I did so I noticed a glitter in his eyes—a look of amused intelligence. He accepted my arm. We walked on for a short distance, and he said:

"You are a good girl. If you had not offered to see me home, I would have been arrested, and that would have been ruin. I am already under a cloud."

"How can you do it?" I asked.

"Well, that's the question I am asking myself," he said; and then, withdrawing from his hold upon my arm, he said, extending his hand: "I will never do it again. When I say so, I mean it." We were standing under a street-lamp at the moment. I had a plain view of his face. His is a remarkable face. He is a singularly handsome youth. His is a classic face, and one who looks upon it will find it hard to believe that he is a villain. I will confess that I was charmed. I am—but a woman, but I was drawn toward that young man by some strange spell. My deepest interest in him was immediately aroused. I love him now. I could not help feeling a strange interest in him from the first moment my glance rested upon his face."

"I have seen many rogues with very handsome faces," said the detective.

"Yes, sir; that may be true, but there is something in Albert's face that you will find different from any other face you ever saw."

"Did you accompany him to his home?"

"No, sir. We parted right then and there. But upon the following night, when I came forth from my school, I found him waiting for me."

"Had you agreed to meet?"

"No, sir. But I will be perfectly frank, and will admit I was pleased to see him. He was perfectly sober, and if he looked handsome upon the previous night, he really looked far hand-

somer as he came forward and addressed me upon the occasion of our second meeting."

"What excuse did he give for coming to meet you?"

"He told me that he had thought over my kindness of the previous night, and he had come over himself to express his gratitude. That, sir, is how I first met Albert Gray."

"And how long ago is that?"

"Over a year ago."

"Has he kept his word as to drinking?"

"Yes, sir; and he has never handled a card since that night."

"But he was discharged for gambling since then."

"No, sir; this discharge had taken place about that time, and previous to his first meeting with me. Later on he told me his story."

"What is his history?"

"Like me, he is an orphan. He knows nothing about his parents—that is, he does not remember having a father or mother. He was bound out to a farmer, who treated him badly. He ran away and came to New York. He got work and attended night school, and was very studious. He did get into the habit of gambling; but, sir, he told me that he had only attended a dozen horse-races in his life, and had not been in a gambling-saloon a greater number of times. The night I saw him was the first time he had ever been intoxicated, and since that time he has never been to a horse-race, has never entered a gambling-saloon, has never drunk a drop of liquor."

"You believe this to be true?"

"Yes, sir; I know it is true."

"The evidence against him is very strong."

"It is certainly an unfortunate series of circumstances, sir; but he is innocent."

"Has he ever made any explanation to you since his arrest?"

"No, sir."

"Did you ask him to explain?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what did he say?"

"He said he could make no explanation, because he could not understand it himself."

"Did he advance any theory?"

"No, sir."

A moment the detective meditated, and then said:

"My poor child, I can not see that I can do anything for you."

The girl's fair face was upturned toward him when he spoke, and there came over it a look of such absolute despair that the good-nature of the detective was touched, and from the goodness of his great heart he said:

"I did not say I would not try."

There came a look of gladness to the fair face that was delightful to behold, and from that instant the detective determined that he would try.

"I can not give you any hope at present," he said; "but I will investigate, and I may decide to take hold of the case. I can not tell."

"How much will it cost, sir?"

The detective smiled.

"I have a few hundred dollars, sir, that were held in trust for me, and I have saved a little money. I have nearly a thousand dollars."

"Poor child!" was the thought that ran through Old Sleuth's mind; but he said:

"We will talk about that later on. You come here at this same hour of the clock to-morrow night, and then I will tell you how much it will cost."

CHAPTER III.

THE girl rose from her seat, but seemed disinclined to go.

"What would you say?"

"Oh, sir, if it would cost more than I have, I will agree to pay you as fast as I can."

"If you spend all your money, how will you get married?"

The detective only made the last remark as a sort of diversion.

"We are both young. We can wait. All that is needed now is to prove his innocence."

"And you think I can do that?"

"Yes, sir, you can."

The girl spoke with peculiar emphasis and confidence, and her great confidence touched the old detective, and as his glance softened, he said:

"I have about retired from business. I am getting to be an old man; but I will say that if, after investigation, I feel justified in believing

in this young man's innocence, I will do all I can to establish it, and I will do it for your sake."

"You are so kind!"

"Come, come; we will not talk about that now, and do not place too great confidence in what I say. Mark well my words: my promise is contingent, and at present all I promise is to investigate."

"Yes, sir; I understand."

"You appear to have great confidence in me."

"Oh, yes, sir, I have."

"Suppose, after I investigate, I come to the conclusion that the young man is guilty, what will you do then?"

"Whatever you advise, sir," came the guileless answer.

"Poor girl—poor, innocent girl!" was the thought that again ran through the detective's mind.

"We shall see," he said.

"I have confidence in you, sir—confidence in your judgment—and I have confidence in Albert, and I know that after you have investigated you will become as thoroughly convinced of his innocence as I am."

"I trust you are correct, for your own sake; for again I say, if I am led to believe that the young man is really innocent, I will establish his innocence, if it takes me the balance of my life to do it. And now you can go, and return about this time to-morrow evening, and then I will tell you what I can do; but—"

The girl looked up wistfully in his face, and the detective resumed:

"I fear I will have to give you the advice."

"No, no; you will be bound to your promise if I can convince you that you shall be well paid."

Sleuth laughed in his quiet way, and said:

"We shall see."

A few moments later the detective was alone, and there came a change over his countenance.

"It is a sad life-history," he said. "Yes, but I will keep my promise. But that man is guilty. I am satisfied of that; the proofs are too overwhelming."

A little later the detective went to his telephone and called, when the little tinkle came:

"Is that you, Badger?"

"Ay, ay!"

"Can you leave town and see me?"

"Certainly."

"Come at once."

Half an hour later a younger man than Sleuth—but a keen-faced, resolute-looking man—entered the great detective's presence. The two men lighted their cigars, and Sleuth said:

"Old pard, I don't know but I've got a case."

"I told you that you would get on to another case some day."

"I am not on to it yet. But you have read up this big case down in Wall Street?"

"You mean the case of Davis?"

"Yes."

"I've read it up."

"They have got young Gray in jail."

"Yes."

"Did you ever see that young man?"

"No."

"What's your idea?"

"He's the arch-devil in the matter. Poor Davis! if he hadn't killed himself, I think he could have established his innocence."

"He left some papers after his death?"

"Yes."

"Do you know all about those papers?"

"Yes."

"Tell me about them."

Badger proceeded to tell the history of the papers found after the death of Davis, and Sleuth lay back in his chair with his eyes closed, and listened. When his old-time pal had concluded, the detective said:

"That is a pretty clear case."

"Yes."

"Davis committed suicide before his arrest?"

"Yes."

"And the papers, where were they found?"

"They were lying on a table in the room where Davis killed himself."

"Right where they could be found?"

"Yes."

"The suicide evidently intended that they should be found?"

"Yes; he evidently wanted his innocence to be established."

"If he was innocent, why did he kill himself?"

"He must have been a weak man, and did not have the nerve to go through the ordeal." Old Sleuth had pulled out his book and was making notes, and he entered Badger's last answer, as recorded in full, and underlined the words "a weak man."

"How much of a family had Davis?"
"Only a wife and an adopted child."
"How did he kill himself?"
"By shooting."
"How did he shoot?"
"He blew off the top of his head almost, by putting the pistol in his mouth."
"Mutilated himself beyond all recognition, I suppose?"

"Yes."
"He had nerve at the last, for a weak man."
"Oh, that don't count; weak men are more apt to commit suicide than men with good nerves."

"That's so," assented Sleuth, with a peculiar gleam in his eyes.

"What are you up to, old man? What is it you suspect?"

"Oh, nothing; I'm just laying out a few points for later consideration."

"You are making notes?"

"Yes."
"Are you going into this case?"

"I don't know. By the bye, Badger, is it possible that young Gray can be innocent?"

"That man is one of the coolest young rogues that ever went unhung. He will not commit suicide; he has plenty of nerve."

"Have you seen him?"

"No; but I've talked with some of the officers who are on the case, and they say he is a bad one."

"Badger, I want you to do me a favor."
"All right."

"I want you to look up the record of this young man during the last year. I want to know if within a year he has been on a race-track, in a gambling-room, or whether or not he has been drunk or in association with sporting men."

There was a knowing look on Badger's face as he said:

"I'll get on to it for you."

CHAPTER IV.

BADGER had been out of active work for some time, but had not really retired from the profession, and in great cases he was ready to take a hand. The two detectives had an extended conversation, and finally separated, and a few moments after the departure of Badger a lady was shown into the presence of the detective.

"I am glad you have called, madame," said the detective.

"So am I if it is a pleasure to you."

"I'll tell you, Maggie, I've a case on hand."

"What! you propose to put on the harness again?"

"I may or I may not, but at any rate I've got a little job for you."

"I am prepared to go to work."

"There is a female teacher in School —?"

"Yes."
"The same girl teaches in Night School —?"

"Yes."
"Her name is Mary Penham?"

"Yes."
"I want to know something about her."

"When shall I report?"

"Some time to-morrow afternoon."

"She is the girl who is to marry Albert Gray."

"Eh, you know her?"

"Yes; I can report now."

"You can?"

"Yes."

"How is that?"

"I've been on her track for over a week."

"You have?"

"Yes."

"On what lay?"

"The fellow Gray has put away those bonds somewhere, and he must have a confederate; and who more likely to be that confederate than the girl he is to marry?"

"What do you make out concerning her?"

"I haven't made out anything yet. I can't get on to one suspicious incident. She appears to attend to her duties; her reputation is of the best; she makes no denial of the fact of her engagement."

"You mean since Gray's arrest?"

"Yes."

"Does she boast of it?"

"No, nor does she talk of it. But when I

ran down on her she admitted she was to marry him. She is a mystery."

"What does she seem like?"

"She seems to be a very innocent girl. She is a sweet-faced creature, greatly beloved by the scholars under her care, and also by the teachers in her school."

"You can not get on to anything?"

"No—say that she is, or was, a great deal in Gray's company."

"How about her dress?"

"She has never dressed save in accord with her position."

"Any jewelry?"

"I can not learn that she has ever had any."

"Everything proper between her and the young man?"

"Everything, as far as I've got on to them yet."

"You say she is a mystery?"

"Yes."

"Why do you say so?"

"She is so innocent looking; and yet she must be deep. I am satisfied she knows a great deal. I've run her under all kinds of tests, but can't draw her out."

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes, once."

"Have you talked with him?"

"Yes, under cover."

"Well?"

"He is a deep one."

"What sort of a looking chap?"

"Very handsome. No one would suspect he was a villain."

"Are you sure he is?"

"No doubt; the evidence is too overwhelming."

"You say he is handsome?"

"One of the handsomest fellows I ever saw."

"He protests his innocence?"

"Yes, of course."

"What explanation does he offer?"

"None at all; merely says he can't explain it himself. He does not appear to have a theory."

"You are satisfied of his guilt?"

"Yes."

"How do you account for his demeanor?"

"He has arranged this scheme, expecting to be exposed, and intending to take his punishment and then come out rich; but I reckon he'll be pretty odd when he comes out. They will send him up for twenty or thirty years."

"You do not think there is any possibility of his innocence?"

"He is a guilty man."

"And you say you can not get anything on the girl?"

"No; but I've a little scheme that may work."

"What is it?"

The Lady Detective, Maggie Everett, related her plan. Sleuth did not offer any protest against its trial, and a few moments later he was again alone. He sat a long time lost in deep thought, and ever and anon he would refer to his note-book and make little marks, and finally he muttered:

"There is something strange about all this, and we'll all see before to-morrow night. I've set Badger to work, and Maggie is at work. I reckon I'll put on my coat, go out for a prow, and do a little shadowing on my own account."

Old Sleuth had great confidence in Maggie Everett, the Lady Detective. She was a smart woman. She had been his aid in times gone by, and he knew her judgment was good; and he was not surprised when he learned that she had been put on the case to hunt up those bonds.

"There is one thing in Mary Penham's favor," he muttered, "Maggie confirms her story. The Lady Detective hopes to find out something; but up to the present time she is at fault. Well, we'll see."

Sleuth was soon on the street. He proceeded to head-quarters and asked to see a photograph of the man Davis. A picture was handed to him. He scanned it carefully, and there gradually crept over his face an odd expression. He was still looking at the picture when a hand was laid on his shoulder, and looking up, he recognized Badger.

"Halloo, Badger!"

"That's Davis's photograph?"

"Yes."

"What do you think of it?"

"I think you were mistaken."

"I was mistaken?"

"Yes, you were mistaken."

"I was?"

"Yes."

"How?"

Sleuth indulged in one of his old-time smiles, and, with a peculiar emphasis and manner, said:

"That fellow was not a weak man."

"What the devil is he getting at?" was Badger's comment.

CHAPTER V.

"You've got a theory, old man?" said Badger, after a moment.

"Oh, no, not specially; but you know, Badger, I never believe all I hear."

"Let us into your idea."

"Not to-day—to-morrow. But you attend to the little matter I asked of you, will you?"

"Oh, certainly; I'll get that down all right."

"Good-night, Badger."

"You want to shake me?"

"Yes. I may have a theory when I see you again."

Sleuth went away, and Badger, turning to another detective who was present, remarked:

"That man is a wonder. He goes into things as though he possessed supernatural powers."

"He may be in league with the devil."

"I'd believe so if it were not that he is too good a man. He has a heart as soft as a woman's, and men who are so close to the devil are not apt to be as good and true as he is."

"Sleuth is a good-hearted man."

"You bet! And if he goes into a new case, it's his heart takes him into it."

"Is he on a new case?"

"I don't know yet; but I should not be surprised if he were to get into a case."

Meantime, Sleuth had gone off about his business. He wandered up town to a well-known sporting house. It was late; but sporting men are not apt to turn in early. The detective glanced around, and there was a flutter. He was well known, and his glance over an assemblage like the one he was surveying might mean something to one of them. His eye finally fell on the man he wanted to see, and when the man came to him in answer to his signal, he took his arm and walked him out of the place.

"What do you want of me, old man?"

"You need not fear, Andy; I only want to ask you a few questions."

"I've business on hand. Can't you stand here and tell me what you want?"

The detective came to a halt, and his wonderful eyes were fixed on the man whom he had called out.

"What's the matter, Andy?" he demanded.

"Oh, nothing, only I've got an engagement."

"Why, man, you're pale!"

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"I've been sick."

"Bah! What does it mean? You have not been wanted lately?"

"No; but to tell the truth, it makes a man shake to talk to you, especially a man with my record."

Old Sleuth laughed, and said:

"Why, you goose, I only wanted to have you go with me and identify a man."

Andy trembled like an aspen-leaf.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"An old fellow whom I've lost sight of for a long time. He's under cover, I think, but you would know him."

The man's excitement increased.

"Will it not do to-morrow?"

"Yes; it is not an important matter."

"All right; I'll go with you to-morrow. Where shall I meet you?"

"Oh, I'll find you when I want you. I can't get my man freed at any given hour."

The two men separated, and Sleuth, when once alone, muttered:

"Well, I'll be hanged! That was queer; and that means something, eh? What have I fallen on to? We'll see—yes, we'll see, I reckon. It's funny, but it's my old luck. I wasn't looking for anything there; but, great Scott! I'm beginning to have a theory, as sure as guns, and it's a strange one, too. But let her work. I mean business now, and no mistake."

As our story progresses our readers will learn how important the little incident we have detailed really was, and also how keen and sharp were the detective's powers of observation.

Sleuth had lost none of his original shrewdness. He was not, strictly speaking, an old man. There was plenty of grit in him, as will be demonstrated.

He did not push his inquiries any further.

that night. He had got on to the verge of a theory, and he determined to lay low and watch.

On the day following the incidents we have described, the warden of the Tombs was seated in his office, when a queer-looking old countryman was ushered into his presence.

"Good-morning, boss," said the odd-looking old fellow. "Be you the keeper of this 'ere old buryin'-place?"

"Yes, I am the keeper."

"Glad to see yez. Shake."

The old man extended his hand and went on, saying:

"There's one thing about your old buryin'-place I like. A fellow don't always have to wait so long for the resurrection day, eh?"

The old man laughed, and the warden looked very stern.

"Have you any business with me?"

"Yes, I have."

"Well, open your business to me at once."

"Halloo! seems to me you are in a durned hurry."

"I have no time to waste, mister."

"Nor I, nuther."

"Well, well! what do you want?"

"You've a prisoner here?"

"Yes, I've quite a number."

"One in particular?"

"Which one?"

"That's what I'm going to tell you."

"Be quick."

"You'll get took sick if you always hurry so, old man. Now you just take your time; I'm in no hurry."

"I shall have you ejected if you don't proceed to name your business."

"Got a bouncer here, eh?"

"Yes, I've a bouncer here."

"Show him up. I've read about those 'ere fellows, but I've never seen one. I'd like a run in with one of 'em. Send along your bouncer."

The warden was getting really irritated, and he said:

"I'll give you just one minute to name your business, or I'll bounce you into the Tombs."

"That's just what I want, boss. I want to go into yer old buryin'-place."

"If you go in, you'll stay."

"Will I?"

"Yes."

"Let her go. I'll stay."

The warden rose from his seat and started to approach his visitor, when suddenly he halted, gazed a moment, and exclaimed:

"By all that's—"

"That'll do; I want to have a talk with that young fellow Gray."

"Are you on that case?"

"I'll tell you later on."

"How do you want to be introduced?"

"I've shown you."

"Good! I'll go as your messenger myself."

"Thank you."

The warden proceeded to the cell of the young man Albert Gray, and said:

"There is a curious old fellow down-stairs who wishes to see you."

"Who is he?"

"Some of your country relatives, I guess."

"I've got no country relatives; but you can show him up if it accords with your rules."

A moment later the great detective was ushered into the cell of Albert Gray, and the result of his visit was the most extraordinary that ever followed a similar incident.

CHAPTER VI.

As the strange-appearing old man entered the cell, the keeper locked the gate and withdrew, and the prisoner gazed at his visitor in a curious sort of way.

"Good-morning, young man."

The prisoner made no answer.

"I say good-morning, young man," reiterated the visitor.

Still the prisoner maintained silence.

"Have you lost your tongue?"

"No, sir."

"Only your liberty, eh? Well, well, that is a valuable thing to lose. Your name is Gray?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was your father's name?"

"I suppose his name was Gray."

"You suppose so?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are not sure?"

"No, sir."

"That's strange. You don't know the name of your father?"

"It's unfortunate, sir. His name may have been Gray. I don't know, as I never knew my father."

"Nor your mother?"

"No, sir."

"What do you know about yourself?"

"I was taken from an orphan asylum by an old farmer up in Saratoga County, New York."

"Did he never tell you anything?"

"Oh, yes."

"What did he tell you?"

"Well, about every day he told me I was a lazy fellow."

"Did he tell you nothing about your family history?"

"No, sir."

"He only told you that you were a lazy fellow?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was it the truth he told you?"

"I reckon it was, sir. I did not like farm work, and I did not like the farmer and his family."

"Why not?"

"They were coarse, vulgar people, and he was a blasphemous man, cruel to me."

"Cruel to you?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"He gave me but little to eat, made me work hard, and beat me unmercifully upon the slightest provocation."

"How did you come to part?"

"I ran away."

"How long ago was that?"

"About twelve years ago."

"How old are you now?"

"Twenty-four."

"And what have you done since?"

"Earned my living the best I could. But will you tell me, sir, why you ask me all these questions? Who are you?"

"I will tell you presently, young man. Is the farmer living yet who used to thrash you so unmercifully?"

"I suppose he is, sir; I haven't heard of his death."

"Have you seen him since you ran away?"

"Yes, sir; once."

"Under what circumstances?"

"I saw him get off the train once when I was selling newspapers around the depot."

"Did he see you?"

"No, sir; I ran away."

"About how long was that after you left him?"

"About two years."

Our readers may think the questions recorded all irrelevant and very silly; but the detective had a deep purpose in asking them, as will be revealed as our narrative progresses.

"You have not seen him since?"

"No, sir."

"Nor heard from him?"

"No, sir."

"When you first came to New York you sold papers?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you do afterward?"

"Why should I enter into an account of my early struggles, sir?"

"I'll tell you. I am an old man, and I've an idea I know something about you. I've heard your name before. I want to befriend you; you need not be afraid to answer me."

"I am not afraid, sir."

"After you sold papers, what did you do?"

"I secured a position in a lawyer's office. While I was there I went to night school and studied hard, and my employer took great interest in me, and helped me with my studies."

"How did you chance to leave him? Why did you not remain and become a lawyer?"

"The lawyer had a client who took a fancy to me, and he made me an offer to enter his store."

"Which you accepted?"

"Yes, sir, upon the advice of the lawyer."

"What was the lawyer's name?"

"Nesbit, sir."

"Where is he now?"

"Dead, sir."

"And you went with the client?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long were you with that house?"

"About four years, sir."

"How was it you left them?"

The young man did not answer.

"Come, tell me the whole story."

"I would, sir, but it involves another."

"It involves another?"

"Yes, sir."

"Never mind who it involves; tell me the story."

"I commenced to gamble, sir."

"You did?"

"Yes, and I drank a little."

"You gambled and drank?"

"Yes, sir."

"And, as usual, your drinking and gambling has landed you in jail?"

The young man did not answer.

"What I say is true?" added the old man.

"It appears to be true."

"It appears to be true?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is it not true?"

"No, sir."

"You must have some explanation."

"I have, sir."

"Speak plainly to me."

"You are a stranger, sir."

"Not so great a stranger as you may think."

"What is your object in asking me all these questions?"

"I have an object, and at the proper time I will explain it."

"I do not think I have anything more to say about myself."

"Come, young man, tell me all the facts; you will never regret it."

The young man meditated a moment, and during the time his handsome eyes were fixed upon his visitor, and at length he said:

"I have no friends; it makes no difference indeed; the man who should have come to my rescue has failed to do so. I will tell the truth, but I trust, sir, that you will not make public what I tell you."

"You can trust me."

"I was cashier, sir, in the house where I was brought up. The assistant cashier was a son of one of the members of the firm; he took money that did not belong to him. I discovered that I was short; I did not know how it had occurred; I got frightened and related the facts to the assistant. He was a dashing young fellow, really good-hearted. He sympathized with me, and suggested that we set out to make up the money between us. We took more money and gambled with it, and we lost instead of winning enough to make up the deficiency, and finally I concluded to stop right short. I did so, and made a full confession to a member of the firm. He did not believe my story, although I told him the truth, and I was threatened with arrest, and then his own son came forward and corroborated my statement. He went further, and admitted that he was the original thief, and that he was the one who suggested the gambling. He confessed to his methods, the amount he took, and the dates of the former thefts, and the result was I was discharged from the employ of the firm on condition that I would never reveal what had occurred."

The detective listened attentively to this strange but straightforward confession, and after a moment said:

"Proceed. I desire to hear the whole of this strange tale."

CHAPTER VII.

"THERE is little more to be told," said the young man.

"But did you give up gambling?"

"No, sir, not at once."

"Nor drinking?"

"I never did drink much."

"Tell me all the story."

"After I was discharged I did not know what to do, and I did gamble. One night I got intoxicated, and I was desperate, and that night I met an angel."

The old man pretended to start back, and repeated:

"You met an angel?"

"Yes, sir, an angel."

"A real angel?"

"Yes, sir, a real angel."

"Nonsense! Young man, you are superstitious."

"No, sir, I am not superstitious."

"Tell me about the angel."

"Ah! that is a matter that will not interest you."

"Yes, everything in connection with your past life interests me."

"I do not see how it can."

"It does, and in the end you will see. You said you had no friends. Come, tell me all the facts, and may be you will have a friend where you don't look for one."

The detective had a winning way with him. He possessed that rare quality called magnetism—personal magnetism—a quality which gives the possessor great persuasive power over those with whom they may come in contact. The young man was evidently under the spell of this magnetism, and after a moment he said: "I don't care; I will tell you all."

"Yes, tell me all."

The prisoner proceeded and described the scene that occurred upon the night when he first met the fair-faced girl, Mary Penham; but he went more into details, and repeated the kind and encouraging words that the fair girl spoke to him, and admitted that it was through her influence that he decided to stop short and make a man of himself. He told the whole story unreservedly, and when he had concluded, the detective said:

"I am glad you have told me this. And now tell me how you happened to secure a position in the house whose members are your accusers."

"I made the acquaintance of a young man who told me about the vacancy. I applied for the position, and the gentleman whose son had been the first cause of my trouble was my sponsor. To him I referred. He did not like to indorse me, but did so for fear that I might tell the whole story."

"Since you have been in this last trouble your previous character, I understand, has been assailed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did not the gentleman whose son got you into the trouble vindicate you?"

"Because he feared to implicate his son, who has reformed, and who is about to marry a young lady of great wealth."

"He has turned against you?"

"Not actively; but by his silence he permits me to suffer."

"And now, young man, how about the present charge against you?"

"I am as innocent as a child unborn."

"Who is the real culprit?"

"The man Davis, who killed himself."

"Were you aware of his doings?"

"No, sir."

"Did you ever suspect him?"

"No, sir. He was always very kind to me; and when the disclosures came, I was as much surprised as any one."

"But do you know that after his death papers were found inculcating you?"

"Yes, sir, I know that."

"And you are innocent?"

"I am."

"But is not the testimony of a dying man very conclusive?"

The youth made no answer.

"You still declare your innocence?"

"I do."

"Then how do you account for those papers?"

The young man did not answer.

"Come, answer me."

"No one will believe me."

"I may believe you."

"He did not expect an exposure so soon."

"Explain."

Again the young man was silent and thoughtful, and again the detective said:

"Come, tell me just what you think."

"My theory may appear ridiculous."

"Never mind; let me hear your theory."

"I think, sir, Davis was a cold-blooded villain."

"Well?"

"His kindness to me was all a sham."

"Well?"

"He was deliberately weaving a network about me."

"How?"

"He intended to rob the firm, and had he not been exposed so soon, he would have had me so involved that he would have put the appearance of guilt upon me. He was preparing the documents with that intention."

"This is a strange story."

"Yes, sir; but it is a true story."

"Have you ever mentioned this story to any one?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"It would have been of no use. The man Davis is dead."

"That's so; but if he meant to die, why should he, a dying man, seek to inculcate you, whom he knew to be innocent?"

"That, to me, sir, is a mystery."

"And you are really innocent?"

"I am."

"And you really had no part in this robbery?"

"I am as innocent as a child unborn."

"There must be a large sum secreted somewhere."

"Yes, sir; he took bonds and securities to the amount of half a million."

"Where is this money?"

"I do not know, sir. How should I know?"

"But you must have a theory."

"I have no theory, sir. It is all a very great mystery to me."

"Come, you must have some idea."

"I have an idea; yes, sir."

"What is your idea?"

Again the young man was thoughtful, and then said:

"I believe there is a woman in the case."

"A woman in the case?" repeated the detective.

"Yes, sir."

"How?"

"I can not see how a dying man would seek to implicate me. His wife may have been in collusion with him, and when he died, she may have laid out those documents implicating me, knowing of their existence, in order to get away with the proceeds of the robbery."

It was the detective's turn to meditate a moment, and finally he said:

"Your theory is at least plausible, for it does not appear as a probable thing that a dying man would implicate an innocent man. He could gain nothing by it."

"I have another theory, sir."

"Ah! you are getting up plenty of theories now."

"None of them will help me, however."

"What is your other theory?"

"I will not name it. But one thing I declare, I am innocent."

"And do you expect to establish your innocence?"

"No, sir."

"What will you do?"

"Nothing. My life is blasted."

"You will make no effort to clear yourself?"

"I will simply declare my innocence; but no one will ever believe it."

"Yes, young man, I believe you are innocent," said the detective.

"You believe I am innocent, sir?"

"Yes."

"Who are you?"

There followed a pause, and then our great old hero said:

"I am Old Sleuth, the Detective."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE young man started back upon hearing the unexpected announcement, and stared in wild bewilderment, and after a moment, with his handsome eyes bulging, he repeated:

"You are Old Sleuth?"

"I am."

"The detective?"

"Yes."

"And you believe I am innocent?"

"I do."

"And how is it you are here?"

"Believing in your innocence, I am determined to establish it."

The lad grasped the old detective's hand, and, his face beaming with gratitude, he exclaimed:

"How I thank you! How kind you are, and how good! But, sir, you can never prove my innocence."

"If you are innocent, I will prove it. Yes, sir, I will establish it to the satisfaction of every one."

"And why should you seek to do so?"

"I'm getting along in years, and I'm out of the business; but my attention was called to your case, and I began to think it over, and it dawned upon me that there was a possibility that you were innocent; and if you were innocent, I began to think I was the only man who could establish it; and I feel it is true, and I feel it a duty to do all I can for you."

"One moment, sir. Who called your attention to my case?"

"That does not matter."

"I know."

"You know?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, who?" asked the detective, with a smile upon his face.

"Mary Penham, sir."

"Did she tell you she was coming to see me?"

"No, sir."

"Then why do you say she interested me?"

"Is it not true?"

"Yes, it is true."

"She is an angel."

"Well, for her sake, as well as your own, I will take up this case. And now listen to me: you must not let any one know I have been here."

"I will not."

"You have counsel?"

"There was a man come here who offered to take my case."

"Did you engage him?"

"No, sir."

"Do not engage any counsel; leave that all to me. If any one offers to serve you, just tell him the court will assign you counsel. And now mind, you must keep your own counsel, and you can be hopeful. You must not worry and lose your health, for I tell you all will be well."

"Who will pay you, sir?"

"Never mind about my pay."

"And you will really undertake my case?"

"I will."

"Can I offer one suggestion?"

"Certainly."

"If those bonds were found in the possession of another, it would look good for me?"

"Yes, certainly."

"If they were found in the possession of a relative of Davis, it would look still better?"

"It would."

"Then shadow that woman—the wife of Davis."

"Oh, leave that to me."

"If my innocence is to be established, it must come from that quarter."

"I will find out the right quarter for establishing your innocence. Never you fear about that."

The detective held a few moments' further conversation with the young man, and then departed. Before leaving the jail, he held a few moments' conversation with the warden.

"I want you to be as kind to that young man as you can," he said, "and I will pay all the expenses for extra meals."

"Are you on this case, old man?"

"Yes; and I do not want any one to know that I am, or that I have been here."

"That's all right. And what is your idea?"

"What is yours?"

"Between you and me, it is possible it is a job."

"A job?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"It is possible the young fellow is innocent, after all. I've had considerable experience with criminals of all kinds. He does not appear like a criminal to me."

"Between you and me, the young man is innocent."

"I believe it possible; and, as you are on the case, I'll tell you something. A veiled lady was here."

"Ah! the young girl he was to marry?"

"No; a veiled woman."

"Well?"

"She tried to play me."

"How?"

"She gave orders that the young man should have every attention, and said that she would pay the bill. I asked her who she was, and she said she was a wealthy lady; that she visited the prisoner and wanted to see that he was comfortable, but did not wish any one to know of her interest in his comfort."

"She sought to fool you?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Bah! she is no lady; she is one of 'em."

"One of them?"

"Yes."

"Explain."

"Well, I got under her veil."

"And what did you see?"

"A woman's face."

"And you recognized it?"

"I did."

"Who was the woman?"

"Davis's wife."

"You knew Davis?"

"I knew the woman."

"When?"

"Oh, years ago."

"Who is she?"

"I'll tell you who she was."

"Who?"

"The widow of —"

Old Sleuth gave a start. The name the warden mentioned was that of a man who had defrauded a bank years previously, and he had killed himself. His body had been found in

the river, but his plunder was recovered after his death.

"This is news," said Sleuth.

"Yes, old man; and I tell you they were a bad lot. Go for the woman."

"You can rest assured I will run this affair down. Will the woman come here again?"

"I don't know."

"Did she fall to the fact that you had recognized her?"

"No; I did not let on. What do you take me for?"

"And it struck you that this young man might be innocent?"

"Yes."

"Does it not look bad for him—the interest of this woman?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Bah! you need not ask me that question. I am only giving you the facts; go and work on them."

"You'll keep mum?"

"I will, sure."

Old Sleuth departed, and as he walked along he was lost in deep thought. He proceeded direct to the store where young Gray had been employed. He asked for the son—the young man who had been implicated with the prisoner in the gambling scheme. He found the young man a bright young fellow, and said to him:

"Have you a few moments to spare?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you come with me?"

"Yes, sir."

The two went to a restaurant, and when they were seated, the detective asked:

"Do you know young Gray?"

"I do."

"What do you think of him?"

"I think he is one of the squarest young fellows on the top of the earth."

CHAPTER IX.

THERE came a pleased smile over the old detective's face upon hearing the young man's reply, and after a moment he said:

"You believe him to be one of the squarest men on earth?"

"Yes, I do. You're a detective, and I'm glad to have a chance to say so."

"I'm a detective?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I've been expecting one of you fellows to see me all the time."

"Then you believe Albert Gray is innocent?"

"Yes, I do; he is one of the most unfortunate fellows on earth."

"He is?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"In being accused when he is innocent."

"He is in a bad scrape now."

"I know it."

"He was once with your house?"

"Yes."

"He had some trouble?"

"Yes, but was innocent."

"He was?"

"Yes."

"How is it that no one from your house has come forward to testify to that effect?"

"There has been no trial."

"No."

"When the trial comes, I will go and testify."

"You will go and testify?"

"Yes."

"What will you testify to, sir?"

"Oh, it's time enough when the time comes."

"I know something about the affair in your house."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"What do you know?"

The detective related the circumstances just as they had been told to him by young Gray; and when he had concluded, the young man to whom he was talking said:

"That's square."

"What is square?"

"What you say."

"Are those the facts?"

"Yes."

"And are you ready to testify?"

"Yes, I am."

"It will hurt you."

"I don't care; I will not let the boy suffer by keeping my mouth shut. I would have spoken before if it were not for my father. But

when the time comes, I will speak, and don't you forget it."

"You are a fine young man. How did you get into the trouble?"

"Oh, I got to betting on the races; but I've learned a lesson."

"That's good. And now let me tell you there is no need for you to testify."

"No need?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"It would not help his case."

"But I see where you stand. You are on the other side. I will testify."

"You will not, if the prisoner asks you not to do so?"

"Certainly I will not, if a request comes from him."

"You have said nothing to any one so far?"

"No, sir."

"Do not say anything to any one unless you are called upon to do so."

"I'll promise that much; but remember, I am ready to open up any time when it will do Al any good."

"That is all right. You are a good fellow."

When the detective was again alone, he meditated. He had worked a good game when he first went to the jail. He asked a great many questions, in order to test the prisoner's truthfulness, and in a few moments he was fully satisfied that the young man was very truthful; and in his interview with the young man who had been previously implicated with Gray, our hero got another testimony in favor of the young man's truthfulness.

After leaving the young man, our hero proceeded to his home, and there remained until he received a visit from Badger. The great Wall Street Detective entered, took a seat, and said:

"Old comrade, you're a wonder."

"I am?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Well, you do get on to things."

"Do I?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I've tumbled."

"Have you?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"You're into this case."

"Am I?"

"You are."

"Well?"

"You think the young man innocent."

"Do I?"

"You do."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because I begin to think so myself."

Old Sleuth smiled.

"What makes you think so?"

"I've been looking up his record."

"Well?"

"It's a good one."

"He hasn't gambled much lately?"

"Not for over a year."

"He hasn't drunk liquor?"

"Not a drop."

"That looks well."

"It does; and I've had a talk with the men who are on the case."

"Well?"

"They all think the lad is guilty."

"Oh, certainly."

"But these stories don't accord with the facts. They can't find out that he had any pals."

"Not even a woman?"

"No, not even a woman."

"And yet they think he is guilty?"

"Yes."

"Badger, he is innocent."

"I thought so. Yes, I thought you were of that mind, and possibly that is the reason I looked on the other side of the case."

"Ah! now you've struck it, old fellow. It is always necessary to look on both sides."

"You're right. Have you seen the lad?"

"Yes."

"What does he say?"

"Enough to convince me that he is innocent."

"There is a lady in the case?"

"Yes, two."

"Two?"

"Yes."

"I only know of one."

"Which one?"

"The young girl he was to marry."

"How about Mrs. Davis?"

"Oh, she is not troubled as far as he is concerned. She is a poor innocent woman."

"Yes, a very poor innocent woman."

"Halloo, old fellow!"

"Have you seen her?"

"No."

"She is —"

"Eh?" ejaculated Badger.

A moment the Wall Street Detective meditated, and then said, in a thoughtful tone:

"That speaks volumes."

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Badger, the great Wall Street Detective, said, "That speaks volumes," his remark meant something, and after a few moments' thought, he said:

"Sleuth, I've always had a suspicion about that affair."

"So have I, Badger."

"It was not in my way, after the plunder was recovered, to follow it up, but when you tell me that this Mrs. Davis is the widow, I am

"a thinker," that's all."

"She is that man's widow."

"And did you suspect it?"

"I got on to it."

"And you have a theory?"

"Yes, I have."

"Are you going into the case?"

"Yes, I am."

"Not for money?"

"Suppose we recover those bonds?"

"That's so."

"You go and see the losers?"

"I see."

"Make your terms. The laborer is worthy of his hire."

"You bet."

"Go."

"I'm off, pard."

Later in the evening the sweet-faced girl, Mary Penham, was ushered into the presence of the great Sleuth. The girl's face was pale indeed. She showed that she had suffered a great deal since the previous evening. Indeed, anxiety makes fearful ravages in a few hours in one's looks.

"Good-evening," said the detective.

The girl tried to speak, but could not, and the detective said:

"It's all right."

The moment he spoke the words the girl uttered a cry and burst into tears. The detective let her weep. He thought it would do her good. He was a patient man, and, besides, he knew the nature of tears.

At length the girl managed to say:

"Do I understand you aright?"

"I think you do."

"You have investigated?"

"I have."

"Ah, sir!"

"I am convinced."

"Of Albert's innocence?"

"Yes."

"And you will help him?"

"I will."

The girl fell upon her knees and grasped the detective's hand and kissed it.

"Take it slow, miss," said the old thief-taker.

"You will aid him?"

"I will. Yes, I will establish his innocence."

"Can you?"

"Well, we'll see."

"And, sir, how much will it cost?"

"In money?"

"Yes."

"Nothing."

"You must not give your time for nothing."

"No, I will not."

"I do not understand."

The detective smiled kindly down on the girl, and said:

"Rise and listen. If I go into this case, I shall restore the plunder to the rightful owners. They will pay me for my trouble, and in recovering the plunder I will establish the innocence of Albert Gray. So you see it is all right."

"I have one thing to tell you, sir."

"Yes, tell me all you know."

"I think—"

The girl stopped.

"Go ahead," said Sleuth.

"I think I have been shadowed."

The detective laughed right out, and said:

"I shouldn't be surprised. But who has shadowed you?"

"A woman."

"No one else?"

"Yes; several men, I think, have been watching me."
 "You need not mind them."
 "Will they do me any harm?"
 "No."
 "Am I liable to be arrested?"
 "No."
 "You are sure?"
 "I am."
 "And you saw Albert?"
 "I did."
 "And he convinced you of his innocence?"
 "Yes."
 "I said he would do so."
 "He did."
 "And have we reason to hope?"
 "Yes."
 "And I am to pay you nothing?"
 "Nothing."
 "Then I can go down to the jail?"
 "To see Albert?"
 "Yes, and—"
 "Well?"
 "I can order delicacies for him, poor boy?"
 "You need not bother; and, what is more, do not go there too often. In a few days we will have him out of there."
 "You will get him freed?"
 "Certainly."
 "On bail?"
 "No; freed—his innocence proved."
 "So soon?"
 "Possibly—yes. And now you go home and attend to your duties. I tell you that I believe in his innocence, and I tell you that I will establish his innocence. You need have no fear."
 After renewing her expressions of gratitude, the beautiful girl went away, and she carried in her bosom a lighter heart.
 An hour following the incidents we have described, Badger, Sleuth, and the woman Maggie Everett were together. They were holding a consultation, and the detective said:
 "This case is a dead open and shut. I see through it all."
 "Let me see your notes, pard."
 The detective passed over his little book, and Badger studied the notes a few moments, and then said:
 "By ginger! but you have reasoned up to a conclusion."
 "I have; and now let's get down to our work. Badger, you must follow up this fellow Martin. He knows something."
 "What does he know?"
 "A great deal."
 "On what lay will I take him?"
 "I'll give you your cue presently. And now, Maggie, we depend upon you."
 "Whom must I follow?"
 "Mrs. Davis."
 "I thought so. Let me see your notes."
 The little note-book was passed to the woman. She looked it over, and said:
 "Ah, I see. I know now how I must work it."
 "Yes; I want to know all about that suicide."
 "Yes."
 "And where the poor fellow was buried."
 "Yes."
 "I want all the facts."
 "You shall have them."
 "Certainly I shall."
 "Old man, I see your part."
 "Do you?"
 "I do."
 "Well, what is it?"
 "You will trail the living, not the dead."
 "You've got it to a dot."

CHAPTER XI.

OLD SLEUTH, BADGER & Co. held a long consultation, and each was assigned a specific part of the work. On the day following the consultation, Old Sleuth went to the town where the man Davis had killed himself, as it was reported and believed, and he commenced a series of investigations after a method of his own; and when he returned to New York he had accumulated a number of facts. In the first place, he learned that the man had killed himself in the morning, as reported, and a doctor had been immediately summoned who had pronounced the man dead. He had remained but a few moments, as there was no need for a doctor under the circumstances, but a coroner. The detective visited the doctor. He found him a comparatively young man. He lived in a pretty little cottage but a short distance from the house where the self-murder had been committed. The detective was shown into a neat

little room, and a few moments later the doctor entered.

"Good-morning, doctor."
 "Good-morning, sir, and what can I do for you?"
 The old detective studied his man, and then said:
 "I've come to see, doctor, about the death of the man Davis, and I wish to first exact from you a promise that you will not report my visit or its object."
 "Who are you, sir?"
 "I am a party interested."
 "I can tell you but very little, sir. I was not present when the man died. He was dead when I arrived."
 "How long after the shooting was it before you were summoned?"
 "They told me he had shot himself about ten minutes before I was summoned."
 "Then, when you arrived, he had only been dead ten minutes?"
 "So they told me."
 "Didn't the body grow cold very soon? Doctor, wasn't it a remarkable incident?"
 The doctor turned a little pale, and fixed his eyes on the detective, and asked:
 "What is the purpose of all these inquiries?"
 "I will tell you later on. Doctor, please answer my question."
 "Who are you, sir?"
 The detective passed his card, on which was written simply:

"SLEUTH,
 "Detective."

The doctor glanced at the card, and said:
 "Ah! you are a detective. I have heard of you."

"Remember, this is a confidential talk."
 "Yes, sir."
 "I have your word?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "Please answer my question. Was it not a singular fact that the body should have grown cold so soon?"
 "How do you know the body was cold when I arrived there?"
 "Oh, it is immaterial how I obtained my information. Is it not true the body was cold?"
 "Yes, sir, the body was cold."
 "Did it not strike you that it was a singular fact?"
 "Yes, sir; there was a deception."
 "There was?"
 "Yes."
 "How?"
 "The man had been dead many hours."
 "Oh, he had?"
 "Yes."
 "And when you arrived, they told you he had just shot himself?"
 "Yes."
 "Do you know that a pistol-shot was really heard about ten minutes before you were called?"
 "Yes, sir. I inquired about that."
 "Who heard the shot?"
 "A man who was passing the house, and who was called in. I found him in the house when I arrived."
 "Mrs. Davis was alone in the house when the shot was fired?"
 "Yes, sir; she and her husband were alone."
 "And when you arrived, the body was cold?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "Did you ever know of a case where a body grew cold in ten minutes, especially when a man in full health died a violent death?"
 "I never did."
 "What do you think of it all?"
 "I have not pretended to think."
 "Doctor, did you observe anything else that was peculiar?"
 "I can not say that I did."
 "After the shot and wounding, there was not that free flow of blood that you might expect?"
 There came a pallor over the doctor's face.
 "I had not thought of that," he answered.
 "Is it not true?"
 "It is true, and it is a remarkable occurrence. But what are you seeking to prove?"
 "What do you suspect, doctor?"
 "I have not given the matter any thought."
 "One fact is assured: you were deceived."
 "How?"
 "The shot—the real shot—that caused the man's death was fired some hours before you were summoned?"
 "Most assuredly."
 "You are sure of that?"
 "I am."
 "Then there must have been deception?"

"Yes, sir," answered the doctor, in a hesitating tone.

"If there is one deception that we can prove, is it not reasonable to look for greater deception?"

"Will you tell me what you are seeking to establish?"

"I am seeking to establish a fact well known to you."

"And what is that?"

"The body you were summoned to look at was that of a man who had been dead some days."

The doctor's face became ghastly, and in a hoarse whisper, he answered:

"That is not fully established."

"The man had certainly been dead some hours."

"Of that there is no doubt."

"You were informed that he had just shot himself?"

"Yes."

"You know that you were misinformed."

"Of that fact there is no question."

"Then there was deception?"

"Yes."

"If the man had been dead some hours, he might have been dead some days."

"It is more probable that the man had been dead some hours than that he shot himself ten minutes before I was summoned."

"Are you not satisfied he had been dead some days?"

"I did not make a sufficiently careful examination to answer that question."

"You have a suspicion?"

"Let me think."

"Yes, think all you desire. Take plenty of time to think, and give me a straight answer."

After a moment the doctor said:

"I have a suspicion."

"Ah! I thought so. And what is your suspicion?"

"I'd rather not answer."

"You must."

"I must?"

"Yes."

"Then, frankly, as I now think the matter over, I suspect that the man may have been dead some days."

"You were acquainted with Davis?"

"Yes, sir, I knew him."

"When did you see him last alive?"

"Come to remember, I saw him the night previous to his death."

"Where?"

"Are you making a witness of me?"

"No."

"Will I be called on to testify in court?"

"Never."

"I have your word?"

"Yes."

Again the doctor thought a moment, and then said:

"I met him about midnight. I had made a late call."

"Where did you meet him?"

"On the road."

"Where was he at the time?"

"He was going toward the depot."

There came a strange smile to Sleuth's rugged face.

"Did he have anything in his hand?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"I can not tell positively, but I think it was a small satchel."

"You met him at midnight?"

"Yes."

"You are sure of the time?"

"I am."

"And he was going toward the depot?"

"Yes."

"Well, what do you think?"

"I hardly dare think," came the answer.

CHAPTER XII.

THE smile upon the old detective's face broadened, and after a moment he said:

"I am going to teach you to think, doctor. Was it midnight, or a little after, when you met this man?"

"A little after midnight."

"At what hour were you summoned to his house?"

"At five o'clock."

"He was going toward the depot?"

"Yes."

"It would certainly be one o'clock before he could get back to his house and shoot himself?"

"Yes."

"If he had shot himself then, it would only be four hours later when you were summoned?"

"Yes; and, sir, I see you are presenting contradictory facts that never entered my mind."

"Four hours would not permit the body to be in the condition in which you found it at first?"

"No, sir—emphatically not."

"And there were other indices to prove that the man had been dead longer than four hours?"

"Most emphatically—yes."

"And yet you knew he could not possibly have been dead more than four hours, unless you had made a mistake?"

"Made a mistake? How?"

"It is possible you were mistaken, and it was not Davis whom you met going to the depot."

"It was Davis."

"You are sure of that?"

"I am."

"Then I repeat, he could not possibly have been dead more than four hours?"

"No."

"And you are sure the man whom you were called to see must have been dead more than four hours?"

"I am."

"Then what must we conclude?"

The doctor did not answer.

"Come, doctor, a conclusion is presented."

"Yes."

"Well, what must we conclude?"

"What do you conclude, sir?"

"I am asking you."

"I do not care to announce my conclusion."

"Why not?"

"Something is on the carpet. I do not wish to become mixed up in it."

"You are right, doctor. Something is on the carpet, and it will remain there until the mystery is solved. You can answer my questions and avoid being called in a court to answer. If you do not answer me, you may possibly be compelled to answer."

"I know what you are seeking to establish."

"Well, what am I seeking to establish?"

"That it was not Davis who shot himself."

"How could it have been Davis, when you saw Davis at midnight and was called to see the body of a man who had been dead some days?"

"This is a terrible proposition, sir."

"We will meet it frankly."

"You believe a trick has been played?"

"You know, doctor, that there was deception in one instance. The man had certainly been dead longer than ten minutes?"

"Yes."

"And yet the death-shot was heard ten minutes before you were called."

"So it was said."

"Then there was deception?"

"In that case, yes."

"That deception is established?"

"Yes."

"Beyond all question?"

"Yes."

"Then we have a right to surmise that there were other deceptions?"

"Yes."

"What is your final conclusion?"

"I did have a suspicion, sir."

"Well?"

"You have confirmed my suspicion."

"And you are satisfied?"

"I am."

"And what is your conclusion?"

"I am not to be dragged into this matter?"

"No."

"How can you avoid it?"

"You have my word. I will prove the position later on."

"Then it is my conclusion that it was not the body of Davis I was called in to see."

"There is no doubt about that, doctor?"

"I do not think there can be."

"Then there must have been a trick."

"Yes."

"Other evidence goes to prove that a man previously dead was made to represent the supposed dead Davis."

"I had not thought of that before; but since you have called my attention to so many strange and remarkable facts and coincidences, I am compelled to accept your theory."

"Is not my theory yours?"

"Yes."

"It was a cunning trick."

"It must have been. And what could be the object?"

"Doctor, you are a sensible man; you can be trusted. I will tell you—the whole affair had been previously planned."

"It must have been."

"That man is in possession of half a million of stolen property, and an innocent young man is in jail."

"This is all very thrilling and remarkable."

"It is."

"And what will you do? I am sure you will be compelled to call me into court."

"Oh, no."

"How will you avoid it?"

"We have reason to believe that this man is living?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then we will trail for the living."

"Yes, I see."

"If we find him, there will be no need to have you come forward and prove that he is not dead."

"Yes, I see now."

"The fact that he is found alive will be sufficient in itself."

"Yes."

"And I will find that man."

"It is a very remarkable case; and now, since I see that I will not be involved in any way, I will speak freely."

"Yes, speak freely."

"From the very moment that I looked upon that man I knew there was something wrong, and when I came into the house, I found his wife arranging some papers."

"Aha! what papers were they?"

"The papers that were found on the table, and were supposed to have been placed there by the dead man."

"Did the woman know you saw her?"

"Yes, and she said to me: 'See, doctor, what I have found.'"

"But you knew she did not find them?"

"Yes. I saw her go into the room with the papers in her hand. I had stopped a moment to take breath after my run to the house."

"I guess we've got 'em!" muttered the detective.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE detective had some further conversation with the doctor, and after again impressing upon him the need of absolute secrecy, he departed and returned to the city. That same evening the firm held a consultation.

"Well," asked Sleuth, "what have you to report, Badger?"

"I've seen the firm, and I've made a bargain."

"Did you see Martin?"

"Yes."

"What did you make out of him?"

"I only sounded him a little."

"He was on his guard?"

"He was."

"Knows something?" said the great detective.

"That is my conclusion."

"We must go very slow with him; but you want to watch him."

"Yes, I made up my mind to do that. Martin hasn't been in anything lately, and there is no reason why he should be so shaky."

"That is the view I take of it, and we will just narrow him down."

"I'll take a clean run in on him to-night."

"And now, Maggie, what have you to report?"

"I ran the widow down."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"And what have you raked out?"

"She has plenty of money."

"Oh, certainly."

"She pulled down some very expensive sparks to-day."

"From a pawn-shop?"

"No; she had them pledged with an outside money-lender."

"You have not interviewed her yet?"

"No; I am waiting for points."

"I've got them for you; but we must use them very carefully. We do not wish to scare these people yet. They think it's all right."

"Martin is uneasy."

"A guilty conscience, that's all," said Sleuth. The latter meditated a moment, and then said:

"I've got on to the real game. The man is not dead. They played a big trick; but, as usual, they have left a few openings."

The detective then related all the facts he had ascertained. His pals listened in mute amazement, and when he had concluded, Badger said:

"Well, it was a big game."

"It's my idea," said Sleuth, "that this man Davis had been dead some time."

"It looks that way."

"His wife is a good one."

"She is a smart woman."

"You hear that, Maggie?" said Sleuth, nodding toward their female partner.

"I hear it—yes."

"You must look out for her."

"I'll take care of her."

"It's the bonds we want."

"Yes."

"If we get those, we can close in on the thieves easily enough. Badger, you've seen Davis?"

"Yes."

"You are about his height?"

"Yes."

"About his build?"

"Yes."

"You have the same colored eyes?"

Badger laughed, and said:

"Are you playing the 'Black Hussar' on me?"

"No; we'll play it on Martin."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Make up."

"A good scheme."

"Can you?"

"Yes."

"When will you be ready?"

"To-morrow."

"Night!"

"Yes."

"Good enough! Then I'll just wait, and Maggie can shadow."

On the night following the incidents we have described, Sleuth sat in his parlor, and in due time there came a ring at his door-bell, and the doctor, with whom he had talked the day previously, was ushered into his presence.

"You are on deck, doctor."

"Yes, sir. Why did you send for me? I thought I was not to be brought into this affair?"

"I wish to ask you a few questions, that is all. Will you wait here a few moments? I will not detain you, and you can take the 8:30 train back to your home."

The detective left the room. A few moments passed, and he heard an outcry. He ran into the parlor. The doctor stood with bulging eyes, his face pale, and he was glaring at a mirror as Sleuth ran into the room. The doctor ejaculated:

"He is dead!"

"Who is dead?"

"Davis."

"Eh?"

"Davis is dead. You and I were mistaken in our conclusions."

"Nonsense, doctor! What do you mean?"

"I am a strong man, sir, a man of nerve."

"Certainly."

"I do not believe in ghosts, or, rather, I did not; but I've seen one."

"You've seen a ghost?"

"I have."

"Nonsense! you are excited."

"No, sir; I saw a ghost."

"Where?"

"Reflected in that mirror."

"A ghost?"

"Yes."

"Whose ghost?"

"The ghost of Davis. We were mistaken. The man is dead."

"You saw the ghost of Davis?"

"I did."

"Tell me about it."

"I was sitting here, when suddenly a bright light shone on that mirror. I looked up, and there, as plain as in life, stood Davis, or, rather, his reflection, and his hand was raised toward me in a warning manner."

"Nonsense, doctor! you were tired. You must have fallen off into a sleep. You have been dreaming."

"No, sir, I was not dreaming. It was a most strange, weird, and unnatural apparition."

"Ah, you are surely mistaken, doctor."

"I am not."

"You saw that man's reflection in the glass?"

"I did, I'll swear."

"This is very strange."

Even as Sleuth spoke the glass, was again illuminated, and there, sure enough, was the reflection of the man Davis.

"See! see!" cried the doctor.

"Yes, we will see," said Sleuth, in a calm voice. "Is that the figure of Davis?"

"It is, as sure as I am alive."

"We will investigate this," said our hero. "I tell you, ghosts are not supernatural; they give back our reflections from mirrors. If that is the reflection of Davis, the original must be here."

The reflection disappeared from the face of the mirror, but the next instant the real man walked into the room and stood confronting the doctor and the detective, and his attitude was the same as it had been in the mirror.

CHAPTER XIV.

The doctor stood and gazed like a man suddenly transfixed, and the ghost, as he believed it to be, stood immovable.

"Who are you?" demanded Sleuth, addressing the apparition.

There came no answer.

The detective whispered to the doctor:

"Look well at it. Is it not a trick?"

The doctor needed not to be told to look well at the thing, for his eyes were glaring at it. The apparition glided away.

"Well, that is an odd arrangement!" said Sleuth.

The doctor had suddenly recovered his nerve, and turning toward the great detective, he said:

"I see through it all, sir; it was well done."

"What was well done, doctor?"

"You are in league with the thieves."

"What, sir?"

"Oh, I see it all!"

"Will you explain?"

"Yes, I will."

"To do."

"You are not Sleuth; but I will report all the facts to the real Sleuth. Yes, I will. I propose to sift this mystery to the bottom now."

"Ah! doctor, you have another suspicion?"

"Yes, I have."

"Explain it."

"No, sir, I will bid you good-evening. Your scheme will not work. That was no ghost. Your game was well played."

"Do not go away, doctor."

"I shall go, and I shall open up this business."

"What business?"

"You fellows suspected I might tell my story some day. You came to me to forestall it, and now you are making it appear that Davis is really dead, and hope thereby to close my mouth forever. I would have been silent, but now I shall speak."

There was an amused smile on Old Sleuth's face. The joke was a good one. He discerned the doctor's suspicion, and he said:

"Doctor, I've a revelation to make that will amaze you. I have already captured Davis."

"You have already captured Davis?"

"Yes, sir. I've got him alive."

"What do you mean?"

"I'll tell you. I've captured a man whom I think is Davis; but I am not sure. I knew you were well acquainted with Davis, and I desired to have an involuntary identification. I wished to take you unawares, so you would not expect to meet him. I am satisfied now I have the right man. We shall see. Come with me."

"Where shall we go?"

"I will introduce you to the ghost."

The detective led the doctor into the rear room, and there sat a man in a chair, with handcuffs on him, and he looked for all the world like a prisoner. The doctor gazed in unfeigned amazement, and the detective whispered the inquiry:

"Is that the man?"

"That is Davis."

"You can swear to him?"

"I can, sir, where."

"Thank to him."

The doctor was a man of nerve, and he said:

"Here, this is an unfortunate affair."

The man Davis scowled on the doctor, and answered:

"It was you who gave me away."

"No, no, I did not."

"Let me see."

"What could I give you away?"

"You were going to the street."

"I was just going to the street. I looked upon the man who called on you in your house, and he looked exactly like you."

"No, that is all right. He then will come."

The doctor then led to the doctor.

"You need not remain here and endure his abuse."

He led the doctor from the room, and as they walked away, Davis called:

"My day will come."

"You need not fear, doctor; it will be a long time before his day comes."

"How did you manage to capture him so soon?"

"I am not sure yet that we have the right man."

"Oh, yes, you have the right man."

"That is Davis, eh?"

"That is Davis, and no mistake."

"Doctor, you are mistaken."

"No, sir, I am not."

"You are certain it is Davis?"

"Yes."

"Go back and take another look at him."

"No need. I tell you it is Davis."

"Come and take one more look at him."

The detective led the doctor back to the room, and said:

"Now look at him well."

"It is Davis," said the doctor.

"You are sure?"

"I am."

"There can be no doubt?"

"None whatever."

The doctor turned as though to go away, when Sleuth said:

"Wait, doctor; I will show you how easy it is for a man to be mistaken."

The detective stepped over to the chair in which the supposed Davis sat, tore off his wig, and disclosed the head of Badger, the Wall Street Detective. The doctor recoiled, more amazed and evidently more alarmed than when he supposed he was gazing at a ghost. Old Sleuth watched, and both detectives smiled in an amused manner.

At length the doctor asked:

"What does this all mean?"

"I will explain," said Sleuth. "My friend here, whom you mistook for Davis, is a fellow-detective. We propose to entrap Davis. We were not fully satisfied as to the disguise. We brought you here to test it."

"It is the most wonderful simulation I ever beheld or read about."

"You think he will pass?"

"He would be hung for Davis, with his wig on."

"Doctor, we are much obliged to you; and I want you to take another look with your eyes open."

CHAPTER XV.

BADGER removed the wig, and the doctor looked, and said:

"The simulation is perfect."

"He will pass?"

"Yes."

A few moments later the two detectives were alone, and Sleuth said:

"It will do, Badger."

"Yes; it is the best double I ever worked."

"And, old man, we must go carefully."

"You can trust it to me."

Two hours following the incidents we have described, the man Martin was proceeding along a side street running parallel with Broadway, when a man in a slouch hat followed after him and touched him upon the shoulder. Martin turned and demanded:

"Well, what do you want?"

"Hush! not so loud, old man," came the warning, and as the man in the slouch hat spoke, he raised his hat and disclosed his face.

"Great Scott! Davis, what does this mean?"

"You're a fool."

"But you've taken my breath away."

"I should think I had."

"I thought you were in Philadelphia."

"I am here now."

"You are taking big chances."

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"Bah! I'm a dead man."

"Are you?"

"Of course I am."

"I don't know, old fellow. It looks bad."

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"What I say—if looks bad. Have you seen your wife?"

"No."

"I've bad news for you."

"Well, what is it?"

"They've twigg'd the trick."

"Twigg'd the trick?"

"Yes."

"What are you getting at?"

"I've been wanting to see your wife and give her the tip."

"What tip?"

"I tell you they've twigg'd the trick."

"What trick?"

"There is but one trick for them to twig, old man."

"Do you mean to say it is suspected I am living?"

"Yes."

"Who suspects it?"

"Old Sleuth."

The man in the slouch hat gave a start, and in a hoarse voice asked:

"What are you giving me?"

"I'm giving you what I suspect."

"And what do you suspect?"

"I suspect that Sleuth, Badger & Co. are on the game."

"Have you proof?"

"Not exactly; but the other night Sleuth came upon me rather sudden like, and said he wanted me to identify a man."

"That amounts to nothing."

"Ah, no; but since then Badger has been in consultation with the firm."

The man in the slouch hat gave a genuine shrug then. Yes, Badger saw that there had been a counter shadow.

"Badger had a talk with the firm?"

"Yes."

"There is nothing in that. He is the great finance detective, and they are on the lookout for the bonds."

"It looks bad. I think they are on to your wife."

"Oh! she will be good enough for them."

"Not if you are caught."

"I won't be caught."

"You will be if you haunt New York. I tell you Old Sleuth will go through a ghost so fast it will make your head swim."

"I wanted some information. It won't do to trust to the mail."

"But you told us to write."

"Yes, and then I saw I had made a mistake."

"I did write. Didn't you get my letter?"

"But what makes you think they are on to the trick? Perhaps they are only trying to get on to the bonds."

"I've an idea that Sleuth has had an interview with young Gray."

"Gray can't tell him anything. And now, Martin, I've something to tell you."

"What is it?"

"You are getting scared too soon. They are not on to the trick. They are only after the bonds."

"But why should they get on to my trail?"

"Well, that is a strange thing."

"I tell you there is something up."

"It will all blow over if we lay low."

"Will you see your wife?"

"Not this trip."

"Will you leave to-night?"

"Oh, I will take care of myself. Never mind me."

At that moment a policeman's step was heard, and the two men separated. An hour later Sleuth and Badger had their heads together, and they had been talking but a few moments when the woman Maggie entered.

"She has gone to a ball—a masquerade," said the woman.

"Who?" demanded Sleuth.

"Mrs. Davis."

"Eh, Badger, there's your chance."

Badger had related his little adventure to the detective.

"Are we not rushing it too fast?"

"No."

"You want me to see the woman?"

"Yes."

"Remember, he is only as far away as Philadelphia."

"That's it exactly," said Sleuth.

"I begin to get on to it, old man."

"Certainly. One scheme has worked well. We will have these folks crazy in a few hours."

"Go I alone?"

"No."

"Mag goes with me?"

"Yes."

"Good enough! Lady Mag, get your togs on."

"Call for me with a carriage. That's the way to treat a lady."

"You're right, Maggie; I will."

The female detective departed, and once again Sleuth and Badger were alone.

"Old man," said Badger, "I am always ready to defer to you, but I think we are going too fast."

"Wait and see," was Sleuth's answer.

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE was a great blaze of lights. Music floated on the air. There were gay groups, robed in the most grotesque fashion, scattered about in various directions, while in the center of the floor of the great hall nuns, and devils, and apes, and fairies were whirling about in the mazy dance. It was a great mask-ball, and over three thousand persons were present as dancers or spectators, and all was gayety and revelry. It was a brilliant scene, and one of great variety of splendor.

In one corner was a group *en masque*, who appeared to be really spectators, although in full attire for joining in the festivities. The revelry was at its height when a fresh couple came upon the floor. The male was attired as a monk—singularly enough a favorite disguise for such occasions—and the lady was elegantly attired in a court dress of the fourteenth century. The new-comers whirled around once in a waltz, and then retired and seated themselves on one side, and the monk, leaning over to the lady's ear, asked:

"Have you found her?"

"Yes."

"So have I," came the answer. "She is over there in that group far to the left."

"You are right."

"Do you know who is with her?"

"No."

"We will stroll around that way."

"All right."

The lady and the monk strolled around, and they both keenly observed the group to the left, to whom attention has been called. Having strolled by, the man asked:

"Did you recognize any one?"

"Only Mrs. Davis."

"She is got up superbly."

"Yes."

"Did you notice her sparks?"

"Yes."

"How about a woman attending a mask-ball so soon after her husband's death?"

The court lady laughed, and said:

"Why not work on that lay?"

"I will, if I can get her detached from her party."

"We can manage that."

"How?"

"I will draw her away."

"How will you work it?"

"You watch me."

"I will."

"We will walk away, and I will return to the attack."

"All right."

"I do not think they have noticed us together."

"No."

"And you will follow us?"

"Yes."

The two wandered away, but in a few moments the court lady returned alone. As she passed through different groups, the gentlemen, taking advantage of their masks, addressed little pleasantries. The court lady did not notice these addresses, but kept on her way, and soon regained the group to the left. A moment she stood and watched, and then going forward, leaned over and whispered in the ear of one of the ladies in the group:

"Kate, I want to speak to you."

The lady thus addressed appeared very much surprised. A tremor passed over her form.

"Come with me," said the court lady.

"You recognize me?"

"Yes."

"Who are you?"

"I must not show my face."

"You can tell me who you are."

"Can't you recognize my voice?"

"No."

"You will."

"I don't now."

"Come with me."

"Where will we go?"

"We will promenade."

"I can not leave my friends."

"You must come."

"I must?"

"Yes."

"How dare you say I must?"

"You are in peril."

"I am in peril?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"Come with me and I will tell you. Certainly you do not fear to walk with a lady?"

"You may be a stranger."

"Am I?"

"You may be."

"I know you. Are you not Kate Davis?"

"Well?"

"You have been recognized by others."

"I have been recognized by others?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"I tell you that you are in peril."

"This is all very strange."

"It is; but you had better come and promise made with me. We will not go off the floor."

A moment the woman Kate Davis hesitated, and then said:

"I have nothing to fear."

"Do you not fear being recognized at a public ball so soon after your husband's death?"

"I will go with you," said Mrs. Davis.

The two ladies walked away together after Mrs. Davis had excused herself to her friends, and when they were a few steps away, the woman said:

"Now tell me who you are."

"You shall know later. Be careful; we are watched."

"We are watched?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"You should be able to guess."

"I will not be annoyed this way."

"I do not wish to be recognized," said the court lady.

"But you can tell me who you are."

"You know."

"I do not."

"Honest?"

"I do not recognize you."

"Lizzie Parr."

"You here, Lizzie?"

"Yes, I am here."

"You said I was in peril?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"A man is watching you."

"A man?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know. But I overheard some strange questions."

"To whom were the questions addressed?"

"Listen, and I will tell you. A man was dancing with me. He had been introduced by a friend. The dance over, we started to walk. A gentleman came and spoke to my partner. I overheard what was said."

"Well, tell me."

"The man said:

"Do you see that lady there?"

"He pointed toward you. My partner answered, 'Yes,' and the man asked:

"Do you recognize her?"

"My partner said, 'No,' and the man said: 'It is Kate Davis; and see how she is covered with jewels.'"

"So, you see," continued the court lady, "how I came to recognize you, and I thought it best to let you know what I had overheard."

"What does it all mean?"

"Ah! you can tell better than I. But one thing is certain—you are recognized, and those men are not your friends."

"Do you know the identity of your partner?"

"No."

"Do you suspect his identity?"

"No; but I am satisfied that he was introduced to me by design."

"What makes you think so?"

"I am known. I took no particular pains to conceal my identity."

"Why should those men be shadowing me?"

The court lady laughed.

"Why do you laugh?"

"At the artlessness of your question. But see! Look over to the right. That man dressed as a monk. Do you mark? He is watching us, and he is coming this way."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE Davis woman betrayed considerable excitement, and as our narrative progresses our readers will understand the cause for her trepidation.

It was the monk who approached.

"That man must not speak to me," said Kate Davis.

"How do you know he wants to speak to you?"

"He has been watching us."

"Better meet him and face it out."

"Who can he be?"

"You can guess, Kate. You know the firm has men watching you. Why don't you leave New York?"

"Why should I leave New York? I am not responsible for the acts of others."

"You may save yourself considerable annoyance."

"Nonsense! I will not be driven away. I will live this affair down, and do it right here in New York."

"If that is your purpose meet this man—meet them all face to face, and do not dodge any of them."

"But you forget."

"What?"

"This is very—yes, very unfortunate."

"What is so very unfortunate?"

"That I should be recognized."

"What difference does it make?"

"It does not look well for a woman so recently made a widow to be present at a public ball. But I had reasons for coming here."

"Face the music. The monk comes to confess you. I will slip away."

"No, do not go."

The woman who had announced herself as Lizzie Parr did not stay, however, but glided away and mingled in the gay throng.

The monk, meanwhile, approached close to Kate Davis, and, in a low tone, whispered:

"You are a nice one!"

The woman trembled, but did not make any answer, and the question came:

"Why are you here?"

"You are very impertinent," came the retort.

"I am?"

"You are."

"Those jewels!"

"What of them?"

"You are a fool."

"A fool?"

"Yes."

"How dare you?"

"Oh, I dare."

"You had better be careful, sir, whoever you are."

"I had better be careful?"

"You had."

"It is a pity you had not been more careful. You have those jewels, and not two months a widow."

"I repeat, you are very impertinent."

"And I say you are a fool!"

"I am?"

"Yes."

"Explain."

"It's a give-away."

"What is?"

"Your presence here."

"My presence here?"

"Yes."

"A give-away?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"They are on your track."

"Who is on my track?"

"Detectives. I thought you were smarter."

"And who are you? Really, you appear to be very smart."

"Those bonds."

"What bonds?"

"Bah! don't you see? Can't you take it in?"

"Will you remove your mask?"

"I will."

"Do so."

"Later on, my lady."

"You are speaking in a disguised voice."

"I am?"

"You are."

"I am compelled to speak in a disguised voice. And I repeat, in a disguised voice, that you are a fool."

"I demand to see your face!"

"You will lose the bonds. You are giving everything away. Your husband is supposed to be dead. Do you know that the truth is suspected?"

The woman betrayed great agitation, and the man continued:

"You are not to be trusted. You are too much of a woman."

"Who are you?"

"I am a friend of your husband."

"You are not Martin?"

"No, I am not Martin."

"Who are you?"

"One who will report to your husband. I

"Tell you, woman, you are giving everything dead away. What right have you—a widow—to come here? What right have you to wear those jewels? Gray is not convicted yet. You would kill things, and yet you are opening up everything."

"I will not talk to you until you tell me who you are."

"I am a ghost."

"You are laboring under a great mistake, whoever you are."

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"You shall know who I am."

"Let me see your face."

"You shall see my face. But first tell me, why did you come here?"

"Let me see your face."

"You shall see my face, but the instant you do I shall disappear."

"You will disappear? Why?"

"You will know why well enough. But those papers must be taken from your custody; you will blow everything."

The woman's trepidation increased, and in a low tone—yes, in a whisper—she said:

"You say it is wrong for me to come here?"

"I do."

"Are you not taking bigger chances?"

"We are not talking about that."

"I know who you are."

"But why did you come here? You know officers are on your track."

"I did not expect to be recognized."

"You did not?"

"No."

"And you are Kate Davis?"

"And you are—"

"Never mind who I am," interrupted the man.

"You may be recognized. How dare you come here?"

"You are recognized; I will not be."

"We will leave here."

"Leave here?"

"Yes."

"And you know detectives are on our track?"

"Why did you come?"

"I heard you were making a fool of yourself."

"You heard so?"

"Yes."

"What did you hear?"

"What I heard has been confirmed."

"It has been?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"By those sparks you are glittering. You pulled those things down. You should have waited. You are going too fast. Are the papers safe?"

The woman made no answer.

"Answer me."

"Let me see your face."

"Come this way."

The two stepped aside; the man drew off his cap, threw off his mask, and slipped back his robes. The woman gazed and fell back senseless against a pillar, and when she opened her eyes the monk had disappeared.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE will here explain a little matter. Maggie Everett was a very smart woman, and when she started to shadow the woman Kate Davis, she cast about for a disguise that would serve her. She investigated and inquired, and fortunately struck upon a party who knew Kate Davis well, and this party told her that the Davis woman had once had a friend named Lizzie Parr; that she had not seen Lizzie Parr for years.

The party gave a great deal of information concerning the intercourse between the two women.

Maggie, having other resources at command if one failed, lay around and managed to bring herself to the notice of the Davis woman. She did not introduce herself. She played a better game. She got a confederate to point her out to Lizzie Parr, and it was Kate Davis who first addressed the supposed Lizzie, who was traveling under a different name, and in this way Maggie had partially won the confidence of the woman she was shadowing.

Lizzie Parr was supposed to be the widow of a man who in his time was a notorious criminal, and Lizzie Parr had known Kate Davis under very peculiar circumstances, so that the real Lizzie would have had considerable control, and the false Lizzie was utilizing her power in a busi-

ness way. Thus the relations between the two women are explained. Maggie, under her assumed character, did not follow Kate Davis up too closely. There were good reasons why she should not do so.

As stated at the close of our preceding chapter, when Kate Davis recovered from her surprise after beholding the face of the monk, she discovered that the man had disappeared, and an instant later Lizzie Parr was at her side.

The Parr woman was not supposed to know all the facts concerning the death of the husband of Kate Davis. She only knew that Kate was a widow, and, of course, the fact that her husband had been a criminal was known to every one. So there was nothing particularly confidential in the conversation that had taken place between the two women. The open facts permitted all that was said or might be suspected. Lizzie Parr, in her talk with Kate Davis, had promised that Davis was dead; that he had really been a guilty man, and had left the plunder in the hands of his wife; and there were reasons why Kate Davis did not deem it necessary to combat the conclusions arrived at by the woman Lizzie Parr.

"Who was the man?" demanded Lizzie.

"You were right."

"I was?"

"Yes."

"It was a detective?"

"Yes."

"Well, what came of your little talk?"

"Oh, he sought to make out something, but I was too smart for him."

Lizzie Parr would have asked more questions, but Kate Davis said:

"You must excuse me; I will go to my friends. Come and see me to-morrow, and we will talk matters over. I must get away from here."

Kate Davis moved away, and Lizzie did not attempt to follow her; but an instant later she was joined by a gentleman who was not *en masque*.

"What did you make out?"

"I am at a loss. The woman was agitated."

"Yes; I have a suspicion. I told Sleuth we were moving too fast."

"What is your suspicion?"

"You must find out."

"Your suspicion?"

"No; but if my suspicion is correct."

"What is your suspicion?"

"It is enough at present to merely tell you that I have a suspicion."

"And what do you want me to do?"

"Follow her."

"Well?"

"Then I will know whether my suspicion is correct or not, and I will open it up to you."

Meantime, the Davis woman rejoined her party and announced that she did not feel well, and would retire. One of the party offered to accompany her. She declined an escort, and soon after left the place alone. She proceeded to enter her carriage, which had been called, but just at that moment a man touched her on the shoulder, and said:

"Let the carriage go. You walk with me."

The woman at a glance recognized the man. She ordered her carriage away, and walked off with the man, and a dark figure followed them both. But the dark figure was but a boy—a mere lad. There had been some great changes occurring within those few moments after Kate Davis had said good-night to Lizzie Parr.

As the woman walked away with her companion, she said:

"Martin, of all men you are the one I most desire to see."

"And I am equally glad and anxious to see you."

"How did you know I was at the ball?"

"I just learned the fact. I was at your lodgings. I have been looking for you. You should not have gone to that ball."

"Why not?"

"You should know why not."

"That has been dinged into my ears enough to-night."

"What has been dinged into your ears?"

"The admonition that I should not have attended that ball."

"You should have known better."

"Should I?"

"Yes. Why did you go?"

"I had a woman's reason."

Kate Davis told the truth. She did have a woman's reason for attending the ball, and her reason is not pertinent to our narrative.

"I have the most startling news for you."

"What is it?"

"Your husband was in town to-night."

"Hush!" cautioned the woman.

"No one can hear me; but it is true."

"My husband was in town?"

"Yes."

"No, no!"

"I tell you he was."

"How do you know?"

"I saw him and talked with him."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"Under what circumstances?"

The man related the circumstances under which he had met the supposed Davis.

"What did he say?" asked the woman.

The man repeated the conversation that had occurred, and when he had concluded the woman said:

"Martin, you are not as bright a man as I took you to be."

"I tell you I saw your husband, and he is not as bright a man as I took him to be. Great Scott! he should not have come to New York under any circumstances."

"You think so?"

"Yes, I do."

"And you really saw my husband?"

"Yes, I did."

"What game are you working?"

"No game."

"Yes, you are."

"Why do you say so?"

"Because I know you did not see Jim to-night."

CHAPTER XIX.

"If I didn't see Jim, I saw his ghost," said the man Martin.

"You did not see Jim."

"Then I saw his ghost."

"No, you did not see his ghost," persisted the woman.

"I did not?"

"No."

"You appear to know what I did not see. Can you tell me what I did behold?"

"I can tell you."

"Do so."

"You saw his double."

"His double?" repeated the man.

"Yes."

"Whose double?"

"Jim's double."

"Madame, what do you mean?"

"Can't you get on to it?"

"On to what?"

The woman was greatly excited.

"The truth."

"What truth?"

"The jig's up. We're in a bad way."

"Will you explain?"

"Those men know or suspect the truth."

"I told Jim that."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"The Jim you met to-night?"

"Yes."

"You simpleton!"

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"Come, madame, talk plain United States, will you?"

"The detectives are on our track."

"Certainly they are."

"And they are on to our game."

"Certainly they are."

"But you do not know how."

"Yes, I do; I told Jim."

"You told Jim?"

"Yes."

"Man, you were fooled."

"Fooled?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"You did not see Jim to-night."

"Will I disbelieve the evidence of my own eyes—my own ears? I tell you I did see him, and I talked to him."

"You did?"

"I did."

"Great mercy! but this is terrible."

"Come, madame, talk it out plain."

"I tell you that you were fooled."

"Explain to me, please, how I was fooled."

"The man you were talking to was a cop."

"A cop?"

"Yes."

"Is Jim a cop?"

"The man was made up for Jim."

"The man was made up for Jim?"

"Yes."
Martin laughed.
"You need not laugh. If you saw Jim, I saw him."
"If I saw Jim, you saw him?"
"Yes."
"Where?"
"At the ball."
"Was Jim at the ball?"
"No; but his double was at the ball, as I saw the same Jim that you did."
The man looked puzzled.
"Explain, Kate."
"A monk came and spoke to me."
"Yes."
"He upbraided me for being at the ball."
"Yes."
"I did not know who it was."
"It was Jim," said Martin.
"Wait until I tell you all."
"Go ahead."
"The man finally let it out that I had the papers."
"Eh?" ejaculated Martin.
"The man let it out that I had the papers."
"But you haven't got the papers. The man was playing you."
"Yes, he was playing me; and later on he removed his mask."
"Well?"
"He was a make-up for Jim—a wonderful make-up; but it wasn't Jim; and, besides, Jim has the papers. He would not have accused me of having them."
"But it was Jim."
"No, it wasn't Jim."
"You are sure?"
"Yes, I am sure. Jim could never disguise himself from me. No other man could ever palm himself off on me as Jim."
"Then it wasn't Jim to whom I was talking?"
"No."
"There must be two of them."
"No, no."
"I'll swear yet that it was Jim who talked to me."
"It was not Jim."
"If it was not Jim, he was the best make-up that ever lived."
"We have the smartest men in the country on our track."
"Yes; Old Sleuth is after us."
"Old Sleuth?"
"Yes; and so is Badger, the Wall Street Detective."
"Yes?"
"He is."
The woman was silent and thoughtful a moment, and then said:
"If what you say is true, the whole scheme has been opened up."
"It has; that is certain."
"They know Jim is not dead."
"If they are working the double racket, it would appear that they did and that they did not."
"Then why do they work the double?"
"They may only suspect, and are trying to get at the truth."
"That is so."
"Then all is not lost yet."
"Yes, it is."
"How?"
"You fell into the trap."
"That is so. Hang it! I talked to Jim as though I knew, as a matter of course, that he were alive."
"How did they get on to it?"
"I can't tell."
"And how is it they have waited so long?"
"I can't tell."
"What are we to do?"
"I don't know."
"They will lay for Jim."
"Yes."
"Martin, do you see our way out?"
"No."
"I do."
"Well?"
"We must get those papers from Jim, and if they do capture him, we will be all right."
There came a strange look to the man's face.
"You don't swear by Jim, I see."
"We should get the papers."
"How?"
"Jim is dead."
The tones in which the woman spoke the words carried a fearful suggestion.
"It is a good scheme. We must think it over."
"We must decide very quickly."

"We must," came the answer.
The two had walked along, and finally came to a halt opposite the entrance to a well-known flat.
"It's no use for us to fight against the cops."
"No."
"We can't down them."
"No."
"And we want to keep the money."
"We do."
"Jim has the papers?"
"Yes."
"You suggest that we get them?"
"Yes."
"At any cost?"
"Yes."
"Jim is supposed to be dead?"
"Yes."
"A man can't be hung for dropping out a dead man?"
"No."
"We will think it over," said Martin; and he walked away, while the woman entered the house.

CHAPTER XX.

THE same evening that the incidents occurred recorded in our preceding chapter, Sleuth, Badger, and the woman Maggie Everett met at the house of the former.

Badger was the first to arrive, and upon entering the presence of the great chief of thieftakers, he said:

"It is just as I thought. You are a great man, Sleuth; but sometimes the shrewdest men will be at fault."

"That is true. Am I at fault?" answered Sleuth.

"I think so."

"How?"

"We went too fast."

"We did?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"We showed our hands too quick."

"We did?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"To that woman. We should have waited."

"Waited?"

"Yes; we opened up on Martin. We should have let the matter work. Now we are at fault."

"We are?"

"Yes."

"How, old man Badger?"

"I went to the ball."

"That was right."

"I played it well."

"I knew you would."

"The woman tumbled."

"She did, eh?"

"Yes."

"To what?"

"She is not fooled. She recognized that I was a double. We've fired a good shot in the air."

"That is your opinion?"

"It is."

"Tell me all about it, old man."

Badger told all that had occurred, and Sleuth listened with a curious smile upon his face, and when Badger had concluded, he said:

"You are sure the woman fell to your being a double?"

"I am."

The great detective thought a moment, and then said:

"Maggie followed the woman?"

"Yes."

"We will wait until she reports before we decide that we were too fast."

"But see what a nice game we had in our hands. Martin will have told her the story of his meeting with me."

"Yes; but she would not have believed him. It was better that she should have seen you with her own eyes."

"She did, and she went through me. She is a very smart woman."

"Yes, a very smart woman," repeated Sleuth.

"I would have played our little game later on."

Again Sleuth meditated, and then said:

"Badger, old man, I have a definite game. I know what I am working for. You just wait until we hear from Maggie."

A few moments later, Maggie joined the two men. Badger sat in one corner, puffing away at a cigar, and Sleuth said, in a quiet tone:

"Well, madame, how did you make out?"

"One fact is well established: Davis is alive."

"Of that we were certain."

"He has the papers."

"Eh?" ejaculated Sleuth.

"He has the papers."

"Ah! I thought so," muttered Sleuth. And he added: "Just repeat all that occurred."

The woman told her story—told how Martin met the woman, and related all that occurred between the two conspirators. Sleuth turned and glanced at Badger.

"I take it all back," said the Wall Street man.

"We wanted to locate those papers."

"Yes, I see."

"I didn't think we could fool the woman, but I wanted her to open up."

"I see it all now."

"We know where the papers are."

"Yes."

"We know whom to follow."

"We do."

"They will communicate with Davis."

"Yes."

"So will we," came the suggestive answer.

"That man is under a good cover."

"He is."

"We will get him to New York."

"Hardly."

"Oh, yes!"

"How?"

Again Sleuth smiled, and said:

"Badger, old man, you are getting jealous."

"Never of you."

"You heard our Maggie's story?"

"I did."

"They know now that we are aware of the fact that Davis is in Philadelphia."

"How are we supposed to know that fact?"

"Davis gave it away to you."

"That's so."

"They know that you and I are on that man's trail."

"Yes."

"They know we understand our business."

"Yes."

"They are smart."

"Very."

"It is possible they may prove too smart. They will expect that we will go to Philadelphia."

"Yes."

"They do not want us to catch Davis while he has those papers."

"No."

"They want to drop Davis out."

"Yes."

"If they go to Philadelphia, we will know it."

"Yes."

"They are smart enough for that."

"Yes."

"They won't go. They will expect us to go, and they will call Davis this way, simply because they want to drop him out. Recall the remark: 'A man can not be hung for dropping out a dead man.' They mean to down Davis."

"It looks that way."

"We will give them a few pointers."

"We will?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Lizzie Parr can work that. We are well into their councils."

"That is so; we have got the threads around them."

"Yes; but it will not be many days before we will have Davis and the bonds, and we will have that innocent young man, Albert Gray, out of jail."

"The way does seem clear."

"And you admit we were not too fast?"

"I admit it."

"Good enough. And now, Lizzie," said Sleuth, "you must go over and see Kate Davis in the morning."

"I will be on hand."

"You must move very cautiously."

"I will."

"We are playing a sure game. I did not hope to be able to close in so soon, but we got those people."

A few moments later the conference broke up, and Badger and Maggie departed together.

CHAPTER XXI.

IT was after two o'clock in the morning when Badger and Maggie left Sleuth's home. The Wall Street Detective proceeded to accompany the woman to her home, not because Maggie was not well able to take care of herself, but in order to save her any inconvenience. A lady

proceeding alone at such an hour was liable to misadventure. The two had proceeded some distance, and were walking along engaged in deep conversation, when suddenly they were confronted by two men. The latter were regular swells. They had been drinking, and were ready for any sort of doings.

One of them stepped forward, and said: "Hold on, mister."

Badger and the woman came to a halt, and the former demanded:

"Well, what do you want?"

"You're a nice duck," came the answer.

"My friend," said Badger, "you had better pass on about your business."

"What are you doing with this lady?"

"None of your business."

"I'll make it my business," and, turning to Maggie, the fellow said: "Miss, do you know that scamp you are with? Here, you come along with me."

The man made a movement as though to seize the woman's arm, when he received a blow that sent him sprawling. At once the other four men spring upon the detective; but it was a short scrimmage that followed. Badger used his fists, and his companion drew a club, and the way they laid out those bloods was just delightful to behold. The five men were left tumbling around to get their feet, while Badger and Maggie quietly walked off, and a short time later the woman was left at her home, and Badger started to go to his own residence.

He had not gone far, however, when his attention was attracted by the shadow of a man, and the experienced officer knew at once that something was going on. The man had dodged; but honest men don't dodge without good cause. The detective looked around, and decided in his mind that a certain house was being robbed.

He was a cool hand. It was an old game for him. He had kept on walking, and did so until he had passed some way along, and then suddenly he turned and he made his way back. He crept and crawled and stole stealthily forward until he came to where the dodger was to be seen. The detective was then assured that his original suspicion was well justified. He stole forward, and then suddenly made a dash, and in less than two seconds he had the dodger in his grasp. He did not permit the man to give an alarm. He handcuffed and gagged him so quickly and deftly that the fellow was powerless ere he fully realized what had occurred.

Having secured the sentinel, the detective approached the house. He found that the rascals had got in through the basement door. He entered the house and immediately removed his shoes, and on tiptoe, and with a step as noiseless as that of a cat, he moved upstairs. He was just in time, for as he reached the parlor floor he heard a scream, and the next instant there came a heavy fall and an outcry.

Up the stairs like the wind flew the detective, and in the hall he ran plump against a man. The two came together with great force. The detective, however, was the first to regain his self-command, and drawing back, and at the same instant letting loose his stick, he dealt the robber a blow that brought him to his knees. A second blow stretched the rascal upon the floor. At the same instant a second man dropped clear over the baluster from above. He landed just beside the officer, and he, too, received a couple of cracks on the head that laid him out groaning upon the floor. The detective then leaped to the door of the room just as a woman all in white appeared at the threshold.

"You need not fear, madame," called the detective. "It's all right. I am here."

Is a terrified voice the woman demanded:

"Who are you?"

"I am an officer. Return and light the gas in your room."

The woman obeyed in a sort of mechanical manner, and the detective stepped into the room, and as the light illuminated it he glanced around and saw a man lying upon the floor, and again he said:

"You need not fear, madame; it's all right."

Explanations followed, and later on an officer was summoned, and the three burglars were taken to the station-house, and Badger, who had appeared so opportunely, reached his own home just at daylight.

It was late upon the day following the incident that we have described that Badger left his home after a most refreshing rest, and he proceeded direct to the home of Old Sleuth, and found the great detective waiting to receive news from Maggie Everett.

In the meantime, Maggie Everett had not

been idle. On the morning following her visit to the mask-ball she was on the street. She had got herself up for the occasion, and was on the way, and along in the forenoon she saw a lady enter one of our large dry-goods stores. Maggie followed up, and getting close to the woman, whispered:

"Kate!"

The woman addressed turned. She did not recognize the party who had addressed her, and the stranger again whispered:

"Lizzie!"

"Parr?"

"Yes."

The two women walked off to a far corner of the store.

"You are under cover?" said Kate.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I am not anxious to be seen. I want to have a talk with you. Come with me."

"Where shall we go?"

"To the Brunswick."

"I will go."

The two women proceeded together, and once seated in the Brunswick, Lizzie said:

"You disappeared very suddenly last night."

"Yes."

"I wanted to see you before you left."

"I was tired."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Kate, you need a friend."

"I do?"

"Yes; and I am prepared to act as your friend. I've picked up news for you."

"You've picked up news for me?"

"Yes."

Kate eyed her companion, and after a moment asked:

"What do you want?"

"Money," came the frank answer.

"You want money?"

"Yes."

"How will you get it?"

"From you."

"From me?"

"Yes."

"I want money myself."

"You can't fool me, Kate."

"What are you trying?"

"I am on to your whole scheme. You have plenty of money, and you must help me and I will help you."

"You will help me?"

"Yes."

"I don't know as I need any help."

"Oh, yes, you do."

"Lizzie Parr, you can't blackmail me."

"Yes, I can."

The woman who pretended to be Lizzie Parr spoke with great confidence and assurance.

"I have no money."

"Kate, you can't deceive me."

"Deceive you?"

"Yes."

"Why should I seek to deceive you?"

"We will not discuss that; but I will show you why you need not do so."

"I wish you would speak plainly."

"I will."

"Do so."

"I am on to your whole scheme," came the answer.

CHAPTER XXII.

THERE came a glitter to Kate Davis's eyes, and she sat silent a moment and just gazed on the face of the woman who called herself Lizzie Parr.

"Yes," said Lizzie; "I know your whole scheme."

Kate Davis was a remarkable woman. Had she been a man, she would have been a leader among men.

"You know my whole scheme?" she said.

"Yes, I know your whole scheme."

"What is my scheme?"

"You put up this robbery scheme."

"What robbery scheme?"

"The little game your husband worked."

"The little game my husband worked?"

"Yes."

"What game did he work?"

"He robbed that firm, and you have the plunder."

"He robbed the firm, and I have the plunder, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I want some of the money."

"You want some of the money?"

"Yes."

"Why should you have some of the money?"

"To keep me quiet."

"Are you a fool, or do you take me for one?"

"I am no fool. I do not take you for one."

"You say you know my whole scheme?"

"Yes."

"Everybody knows it. The detectives know it. What can you tell? Has not everything been a feature in the daily papers for the last few weeks?"

"I know something, all the same."

"What do you know?"

"Shall I tell you?"

"Yes."

"I know you are not a widow."

"Oh, you know I am not a widow?"

"You are not."

"You mean I married very soon after my husband's death?"

"No, I do not."

"What do you mean?"

"Your husband is living."

"He is, eh?"

"Yes."

"He is living?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes."

Kate Davis turned pale.

"I knew your husband."

"Did you?"

"Yes."

"He never told me that he had the honor of your acquaintance."

"I knew him well."

"And you say he lives?"

"Yes."

"When did he come to life again?"

"Last night. Kate, why deny it? I was watching you last night."

"Were you?"

"I was."

"You were very kind. You were watching over me to protect me. I suppose?"

"I was, and I learned something."

"Indeed? What did you learn?"

"I was laying low. I saw the monk remove his gown, and I saw Jim Davis appear from under that gown."

Kate Davis laughed, and said:

"What an idea!"

"It is the truth."

"Lizzie Parr," said Kate, "now tell me just what you are up to?"

"I have told you I want some of the money."

"You are laboring under a great mistake."

"You have no money?"

"No."

"How did you pull down your diamonds, if you have no money?"

"I raised a little money temporarily."

"A moment ago, Kate, you asked me if I took you for a fool. I said I did not; and now you must not take me for a fool, nor must you cast me aside, or I may turn against you. I know more than you think I do."

"Oh, yes; it is evident that you know a great deal."

"Good men are on your track."

"Certainly; that's no news."

"I know just how much they have got to work on."

"Do you?"

"Yes, I do, and I can give you some good advice."

"What do they know?"

"They know Jim Davis is living."

The Davis woman looked annoyed, but said:

"They know more than I do."

"No; you met your husband last night."

"I did not."

"I saw him."

A moment the Davis woman meditated, and said:

"You are not as smart as you think you are. Now let me tell you I know the game those men are working. Do you think I expected to go without being shadowed? No, no; and I've put up a job. I am striking back. I'll fool those fellows."

Lizzie Parr appeared to be confused, and said:

"Do you mean to tell me that you put up that job last night?"

"Yes, I did; I'm leading them along."

"You need not tell that to me, Kate. I know your husband. I can not be deceived. You met him last night. You did not expect to meet him. It was a surprise to you, and that is why you fled away immediately afterward."

"One moment. You are so smart, why did I go to that ball, unless I had an object?"

"Yes, you had an object. It was well arranged. You expected to meet your husband. You passed him a signal, and he identified you. I was watching that man. I knew he was watching you. I did not know it was Jim Davis, but I know now. Yes, it was a good scheme. But there is one thing you do not know."

"What is it I do not know?"

"Others were aware that your husband was to be there, and he was watched."

"What an idea!"

"It is true."

"Why did not they seize him?"

"Ah! there is where it comes in. They don't want Jim yet. There is something else they want."

"What is it they want?"

"You should know."

"I don't know."

"Nonsense! you do know; and it is so. You may as well make a friend of me. I can save you, or, if you turn against me, I can save the other side."

"You say they are looking for something besides the capture of Jim Davis?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"They are looking for the bonds."

CHAPTER XXIII.

KATE DAVIS was greatly agitated. She looked her companion in the face, and finally asked:

"What is it you are trying to make out, Lizzie Parr?"

"I want to make some money, and I can help you."

"You can help me?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"To get away with those bonds. I tell you those men know Jim Davis is alive; they know he is in Philadelphia. They will go on to Philadelphia and nip him. He has the papers, and it is the papers they want. Once they get those, they will make short work of Jim Davis."

"And how can you help me?"

"Agree to take me in with you, and I will tell you how I can help you."

"All right. I will take you in."

"And if I pilot you through, I am to be taken care of?"

"Yes."

"Remember, I can give you away at any moment."

"So you say."

"It is true."

"Well?"

"Something must be done."

"What can we do?"

"They will go on to Philadelphia."

"Yes."

"They will find Jim."

"One moment. Suppose he is alive and in Philadelphia, can I not give him the tip?"

"Yes."

"And he can flit?"

"Yes; but where will he flit to? That's the question."

"Oh, he could go away off."

"If those men once get on his track, they will follow him up. Remember, it is Sleuth and Badger who are on his trail. They can follow him up. If he is to be safe, he must outwit them."

"That is so, if he is alive."

"We will admit, just for argument's sake, that he is alive."

"Very well."

"We will talk on that line."

"Very well."

"Then I say we must outwit them."

"Very good."

"Under the circumstances, they would not expect him to return to New York?"

"No."

"Then, that is the best thing for him to do."

"I will think the matter over."

"You must decide quickly, and if I am to go in with you, I will do my part."

"And what part will you play?"

"I will manage to keep you posted as to the intentions of the other side."

"How can you do that?"

"That is my own secret; but I will do it."

"You can?"

"Yes."

"When shall I meet you again?"

"Why not decide now?"

"I must consult with others."

"I will meet you to-night."

"Where?"

"Anywhere you say."

"Meet me at my own lodgings."

"I will meet you."

"At what hour?"

"Any hour you name."

"Make it midnight."

"I will be on hand."

A few moments later the two women separated, and Maggie Everett proceeded to the home of Old Sleuth. She found the two detectives awaiting her. To them she related all that had occurred. Sleuth listened carefully, and then commenced to ask Maggie a number of questions, and compelled her to repeat over and over again the conversation with Kate Davis. Then he looked over his notes, and meditated, and finally said:

"Maggie, do you think this woman trusts you?"

"Yes, as far as she trusts any one."

"Is it not possible that she is playing you?"

"No."

"You feel certain?"

"Yes."

"And you are to meet her at midnight?"

"Yes."

"At her house?"

"Yes."

"Where does she live?"

"In a little house down by the river."

Sleuth inquired particularly as to the location of the house, and asked Maggie a great many more questions. Finally he told the woman to go and keep the appointment.

After Maggie had gone, Sleuth said:

"We must look out, Badger, old fellow."

"What now?"

"I want you here to-night at eleven o'clock."

"What is in your head now?"

"I will tell you at the proper time; but do not fail me."

"Maggie is doing well?"

"Yes, very well. She has demonstrated that Jim has the bonds."

"She will induce that woman to invite Jim to come to New York?"

"That woman has already made up her mind to invite Jim to come to New York. She and the man Martin have their own scheme. You be here at eleven o'clock."

After the departure of Badger, Sleuth muttered: "What fools these mortals be!" and sat for a long time lost in deep thought.

In the meantime, after separating from the supposed Lizzie Parr, Kate Davis went direct to her own home, and about an hour later Martin appeared.

"I am glad you have come; things look bad."

"That is the way I feel about it," said Martin.

"Those people are deep into our game."

"They are."

"They are playing a deep game against us."

"They are."

Kate Davis told of her interview with the supposed Lizzie Parr. Martin listened, and when Kate had concluded, said:

"We must take Lizzie in with us."

"We must?"

"Yes; and her advice is good. She is a long-headed woman."

"You think so?"

"Yes."

"You are right; she is too long-headed for us. She is working for the other side. I know that man Sleuth."

"Yes, he is a fiend."

"He is, and he is shadowing me."

"Sure."

"And the first thing he would do would be to get some one on his side who is in my confidence."

"You are right there, Kate."

"The woman he has selected is this woman Lizzie Parr."

"Great guns! do you believe that?"

"I know it."

"What leads you to the conclusion?"

"That woman was at the ball."

"Yes?"

"She managed to get on to my disguise."

"Yes?"

"She brought about the meeting between the double and myself."

"She did?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

The woman repeated all that had occurred, and when she had concluded, Martin said:

"You are a long-headed woman, Kate."

"I do not mean to be trapped by that woman Lizzie Parr."

"It does look as though she were in with them."

"She is; and when she saw me to-day she was obeying instructions. Oh, it is a beautiful scheme they are working."

"Are you on to their scheme?"

"I am."

"What is it?"

"I have told you all that passed?"

"Yes."

"And can't you see the game?"

"I can not."

"It's plain enough."

"Open up the scheme."

"Lizzie Parr advises me to get Jim to come to New York."

"Yes."

"All right. When he comes, Lizzie will know all about it, and so will Sleuth, if I fall into the trap."

CHAPTER XXIV.

MARTIN gave out a whistle, and said:

"You are a dandy!"

"Lizzie Parr can not play me."

"It is a good scheme; I never would have jumped on to it. I'll tell you that; and, Kate, I'll tell you more—we had better capitulate."

"Capitulate?"

"What do you mean?"

"We can never play against those men."

"I am ashamed of you."

"They are the two smartest detectives on earth."

"I don't care; I will not wilt. I will teach Old Sleuth a trick or two before I am through with him."

"You can't step out of the tangle every time, Kate."

"I can't, eh?"

"No."

"I'll walk them into a tangle and give them a chance to step out."

"You will lose at that game."

"Will I?"

"Yes."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I fear Lizzie Parr more than I do Sleuth and Badger."

"You do?"

"I do; and I propose to get her out of the way."

"How will you do it?"

"I've snarled a tangle for her already."

"What is your trick?"

Kate revealed her plan.

"It's a bold game," said Martin.

"Yes, it is a bold game, and we must play two or three bold games. We've got that money, and in time we can turn the papers into cash."

"If we were free and clear, we could."

"We will be free and clear. We know their game. We will not let them play it all alone. I tell you we will tangle them. I've several good games to play. I'll give them enough Jim Davises to satisfy them. I tell you, all I need at present is to get the woman out of the way."

"I tell you it is a bold game."

"Yes, it is a bold game. Will you aid me to play it through?"

"That brings me in."

"You forget you are already in, and if those men close down on us and capture Jim, you and I will go up the river with him."

"That's so."

"And that means death for me, Martin."

"Death for you?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I'll never go to jail for a term. It's a life or death battle with me. We have some ready cash, and all we need is to get the papers."

"Yes."

"If we succeed, we can skip."

"We can; and I'd like to skip to-morrow."

"They mean to capture Jim?"

"Yes."

"They want to get him to come on to New York?"

"So it appears."

"And then they will nab him?"

"That's their game."

"They have played the double game?"

"Yes."

"We can play it; we can show them Jim Davises all over the country."
 "Martin, you are a genius."
 "But the first thing to do is to get rid of this Parr woman."
 "I can see where that is a necessity."
 "And you will help me to carry that scheme through."
 "It is a dangerous game."
 "I know it. But it's our best move now."
 "I am in with you."
 "Will you complete arrangements?"
 "I will."
 "And in the meantime I will arrange with Jim. You bet I will make those men bite the dust, smart as they are. Kate Davis has fooled them and got away with them, and she will do it again."
 "If nerve counts for anything, you will."
 "I depend as much upon my discernment as I do upon my nerve. They can not fool me, and Old Sleuth will have a good opinion of me when this little game is over."
 "The woman is to be here at midnight?"
 "Yes."
 "Are you sure she has not tumbled?"
 "She is laughing in her sleeve at me. I will laugh to-morrow if you do your part well."
 "If we carry out your scheme, those two men will get down on us."
 "Good enough! It will be a diversion, and in the meantime we can work our scheme with Jim."
 "That's so."
 "One of us must go on to Philadelphia."
 "We can't do that."
 "Why not?"
 "They have us both under the shadow."
 "That is all right. But when I work my game, the shadow will be lifted."
 "The woman game?"
 "No; the Jim Davis game. They will be chasing the ghost, and while they are we will get over to Philadelphia."
 "Who will go?"
 "I will."
 "That is correct."
 "And I will get those papers. Jim Davis is no good."
 "You don't like that man?"
 "I like you, Martin."
 "The two exchanged glances."
 "You do me proud, Kate."
 "If we get away with those bonds, we can go to South America. You are tired; I am tired. We can settle down, and I promise New York will never see me again. It's a great town, but I can get along without New York."
 "And New York will not sink if we both stay away."
 "No."
 "I am tired of scheming, Kate."
 "So am I; and we will run this little game, and then we will live in peace."
 "You are set to down Jim?"
 "If we get the papers, he can float."
 "He may trouble us later on."
 "Nonsense! he is too lazy. I worked all this game. He was only my tool."
 "I know that."
 "It will be a glorious thing if we can carry it through."
 "We can."
 "We must look out that they do not get a clinch on us individually."
 "We will look out for that. We are not implicated yet."
 "Not as matters stand. But this game to-night?"
 "You need not be in that."
 "All right; I will make my arrangements."
 "Be careful as to your men."
 "Oh, you can leave it all to me."
 "The two discussed their plans still further, and then separated. They were indeed about to play a bold game."

CHAPTER XXV.

It was just at midnight when Maggie Everett appeared at the home of Kate Davis. She was ushered into the woman's presence, and Kate said:
 "You are here."
 "Yes, I am here."
 "I have been thinking over what you said to me to-day."
 "And I trust you have reached a proper conclusion."
 "There are several matters I do not understand."
 "Probably I can explain."

"Yes, you can."
 "I will."
 "I can't understand the little arrangement at the ball."
 "What about the ball?"
 "You were into that scheme."
 "What scheme?"
 "Oh, it is no use for you to attempt to come innocently over me. There was a scheme, and you were into it. You were in communication with the man who was under the disguise of a monk."
 "Maggie said, after a moment's thought:
 "Of course I was. I saw that he was watching you, and I gave you warning."
 "But you had a little chat with him before you gave me warning."
 "The last remark was a stunner for Maggie. She had hoped she had not betrayed that fact, and she still trusted that it was only a suspicion."
 "Yes, I spoke to him. I wanted to draw him out. You know any one can speak to another upon such an occasion. Kate, you want to go in with me. I want to aid you."
 "Then you must be perfectly frank. You are false, or you are playing a double game. That man was a detective."
 "I know it."
 "And you knew how he was got up under that disguise. You are in with those people; and now I wish to ask you are you, anyway?"
 "Maggie became aware that matters were becoming very interesting."
 "You know me well enough," she answered.
 "I am not sure that I do. I have a suspicion."
 "You have a suspicion?"
 "Yes, I have."
 "What is your suspicion?"
 "I suspect you are seeking to entrap me."
 "Entrap you?"
 "Yes. You are playing in with the detectives."
 "What nonsense!"
 "Is it so?"
 "It is nonsense."
 "If it is nonsense, you can prove it?"
 "Certainly I can."
 "Will you?"
 "Yes."
 "Do so."
 "How shall I prove it?"
 "Strip," came the answer.
 "Maggie began to tremble. She saw that indeed she was under a dire suspicion."
 "Come, Lizzie Parr, you claim to be my friend. I will believe it when you prove your identity."
 "I do not understand you."
 "Shall I speak in plainer language?"
 "Yes."
 "You are not Lizzie Parr. How is that?"
 "I am not Lizzie Parr?"
 "No, you are not. Lizzie Parr has been dead eight months; you know and I know it. And now, who are you, and what is your game?"
 "The two women eyed each other, and then followed an awkward silence, broken at length by Maggie, who said:
 "You amaze me."
 "Do I?"
 "Yes."
 "I'll amaze you still more. I know who you are."
 "You know who I am?"
 "Yes."
 "I know you do," came the answer.
 "I know you are not Lizzie Parr."
 "If I am not Lizzie Parr, why should I claim to be?"
 "You are a card in a game. Let me tell you something. I am a widow. I do not fear you, nor Old Sleuth, nor Badger. They are set to persecute a lone woman. They have some big scheme. You are in the scheme with them. You are the company of the combination. In other words, you are Maggie Everett, and I know it."
 "What an absurd suspicion!"
 "Is it an absurd suspicion?"
 "Yes."
 "You can prove it?"
 "Of course I can."
 "Do so."
 "But I'm offended."
 "Oh, are you?"
 "The last remark was made in a very satirical tone."
 "I will not stay here to be treated in this manner."
 "Oh, yes, you will. You can stay here and prove that you are not a party to a scheme to

get me into trouble. You will prove that you are really Lizzie Parr, or—well, you shall prove it."

"I will prove nothing."
 "Kate Davis suddenly rose from her seat, leaped forward, and seized hold of Maggie.
 "Unhand me, Kate!"
 "Kate commenced to pull and fear, and off came Maggie's wig, and a struggle between the two women followed; but it did not last but a second, as a man rushed into the room. He came prepared, and clapped a chloroformed handkerchief to Maggie's mouth and nostrils, and he struck her several violent blows on the back, and poor Maggie fell over helpless and insensible."
 "Kate stood over the unconscious woman, a sardonic gleam in her glittering black eyes, and she exclaimed:
 "Well, I've been too much for you, missy!"
 "You did it well, madame," said the man.
 "I think so. Have you your carriage ready?"
 "We have."
 "Gag her quick and get her away."
 "No hurry, madame."
 "No hurry?"
 "No; don't you see your advantage?"
 "What advantage?"
 "She will talk now—talk plain—own up."
 "You were listening?"
 "Certainly I was—that was my orders."
 "Your idea is a good one."
 "We've got the game all in our own hands. You are the one to talk to her."
 "A few moments, and Maggie revived. Kate Davis stood gazing at her with a look of triumph in her eyes.
 "Well, you did try to play a nice game."
 "Maggie made no answer; but at that instant Sleuth's words ran through her mind.
 "I've got you," said Kate.
 "Still Maggie made no answer."
 "You had better own up now, miss."
 "Still Maggie maintained silence."
 "You've nothing to say?"
 "Nothing," came the answer.
 "You thought you'd play me, didn't you? But you did not know who you were playing. I had no reason to fear you. I've no reason to fear any one; but I hate a traitor; and turning to the man, Kate added: "Take her away."

CHAPTER XXVI.

The man administered a second dose of chloroform to the woman, and then a second man entered the room. The two men seized Maggie and carried her down stairs. A carriage was at the door. Maggie was placed in the carriage, and the two men were about to follow her, when suddenly two other men appeared upon the scene. The two men who had come from the house each received a crack from a club and rolled over in the street, and the two other men who had appeared entered the carriage, and the driver whipped up his horses and drove away. A few moments later he drew his horses to a stand in front of the elegant residence of the great detective. Sleuth alighted from the carriage, and Badger passed out the woman, who had not fully recovered consciousness. She was carried into the house, laid on a sofa, and after a few moments, under the manipulation of Sleuth and Badger, fully revived.
 "Where am I?" were her first words.
 "You are all right."
 "The woman recognized the voice of Sleuth.
 "Have I been dreaming?" she asked.
 "Hardly."
 "Later on, Maggie fully recovered, and recalled all that had occurred up to the moment when the last dose of chloroform was administered.
 "What does it mean?" she asked.
 "You are all right."
 "I am safe?"
 "Yes."
 "This is your home, Sleuth?"
 "Yes."
 "Who brought me here?"
 "Badger and I brought you here."
 "What has happened?"
 "We are waiting to hear your story."
 "The woman related all that had occurred, and then Sleuth told his story. He said he knew that the woman was on to Maggie, and was putting up a job, and he had arranged with Badger to defeat the game, and had succeeded.
 "Well, I was played," said Maggie.
 "You were."
 "I am deeply mortified."
 "You need not be. You have accomplished wonders for us."

"But that woman?"

"It's all right."

Sleuth arranged for Maggie to remain at his house for the night, and turned her over to the ladies of his home, and he and Badger held a long talk. In the meantime, Kate Davis was a wild woman.

The two men who had been so neatly knocked over by Sleuth and Badger re-entered her house. Both were bleeding, and the woman asked:

"What has happened?"

"That's what we want to know. Did you put up a job on us?"

The two men told their story, and after a few moments departed, and later on Martin appeared. The man was greatly excited. He had met the two men, and had heard their story. He found Kate in a desperate mood.

"Well, madame," said Martin, "your first tangle was a failure."

"It was."

"I tell you one will have to stay up all night to get ahead of Sleuth."

"I will get ahead of him."

"So you do not give it up yet?"

"No, I do not."

"We have the cash?"

"Yes."

"Then why not get away with that? Let us quit."

"Quit?"

"Yes."

"When I do, it will be when I am defeated."

"It looks as though you are defeated now."

"It may look so to you, but I am not defeated by any means. I have made one step forward."

"You have?"

"I have."

"How?"

"That woman is out of the way. She will not trouble me any more as Lizzie Parr."

"That is true."

"Yes, it is true."

"But Sleuth?"

"Bah! what care I for him?"

"He is on to your game."

"Is he?"

"It would appear so, madame."

"What fools you men are! Of course he is on to my game. He has been on to it all the time. But he is in a great sweat now."

"In a great sweat?"

"Yes."

"Why so?"

"He knows I am on to his game."

"There is something in that."

"Martin, we are not beaten yet; indeed, we have won a good, substantial victory. We have blocked those men at all their points so far."

"I can not look at it in that light."

"You can't?"

"No."

"I'll show you."

"Do so."

"They started out to fool us on the double. They did fool you, but they did not fool me, and they know it."

"I reckon they do."

"They started out to put this woman on my track, letting her work under cover as Lizzie Parr. Well, I've opened up that little scheme, I reckon."

"You have, I admit."

"Then, so far I am the winner. Now let them play their schemes. As long as I can get out of their tangles I am all right. Remember, they have nothing on me until they catch Jim Davis, and even then he will have to squeal before they can bring me into the conspiracy."

"When they bring you in, they will have a hold on me also."

"They will never bring me in. And now I've let them play their schemes, I will play one of my own."

"You played one to-night, and lost."

"No, I did not play a scheme; I merely played against them, and I won."

"They may close in on you."

"Close in on me?"

"Yes."

"On what plea?"

"Your attempt to kidnap this woman."

Kate laughed, and answered:

"You need have no fear; they will not let it be known how they were beaten."

"What will be your next move?"

"I will go to bed and to sleep, and to-morrow I will arrange a little tangle for them; and if I don't get them snarled, you laugh at me, that's all."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Two or three days passed. During that time Badger had been to Philadelphia. His purpose was, under Sleuth's direction, to beat the bushes and start up the game.

The detective did not find the game, however, and he had about concluded to return to New York and take a prowling, when, one night, as he was walking down Chestnut Street, he observed a woman walking in advance of him. Old, experienced detectives appear to acquire an instinct as remarkable as that of a sleuth-hound, for at a glance Badger detected that he had seen the woman walk before; her gait was familiar in his eyes.

"Great Scott!" he muttered, "what have I struck?"

The detective had overtaken the woman and supposed she had not seen him, and it was his conclusion that he had matters all his own way. He kept upon her track, and saw her enter a house on a side street. He waited around, and felt quite self-satisfied, for it seemed to him that he had finally struck a clew. He hung around the house for fully half an hour, and saw a veiled woman come forth. He started to shadow again. The woman walked along toward the suburbs—it was comparatively early in the evening—and finally he beheld the woman come to a halt at a street corner. She was evidently waiting to keep an appointment.

Some ten minutes passed, and a man appeared upon the scene, and the woman engaged in conversation with him.

The detective thought over the situation and determined upon a bold move, and as he did so, he muttered:

"It may be a little game—a little mislead; but I am ready."

He walked along until he came close to where the man and woman were standing. The man wore a slouched hat, and evidently sought to conceal his face. Badger walked up and ran against the man, and as he did so knocked off his hat, when, quick as a wink, four other men leaped from a place of concealment where they had been lying in wait. Under ordinary circumstances, and with an ordinary man, it would have been "all day," as the saying goes. But the detective had remarked he was prepared, and so it proved, and that old club of his, that had done service in so many previous terrible scimmages, was brought into play, and down went two or three of the men so quickly it seemed as though a lightning-bolt had been playing around, and the other men just skipped in a hurry. They had caught a Tartar. The men who had been knocked over got to their feet and scrambled off as quickly as their legs could carry them. The detective and the woman were left alone. The whole fracas had transpired in a minute at most, and the woman had stood and looked on without making any effort to escape, and the detective, when all was over, turned toward her and said:

"Good-evening, madame."

"You're a ruffian! How dare you speak to me?"

"Don't be offended."

"No one interfered with you. Why did you assail my friend?"

"If I was wrong, madame, why did your friend run off? Why did not all your friends remain and summon the police?"

"That is what they should have done, but they did not wish to remain and be murdered."

"They were glad to get away, I reckon."

"Why did you assail the gentleman who was talking to me?"

"I wanted to see his face, and I want to see yours."

"You want to see my face?"

"Yes, I do."

The woman removed her veil, and the detective gazed upon a really good-looking girl of not over four-and-twenty.

"Who was the man you were talking with, miss?"

"My brother."

"Your brother?"

"Yes."

"But how was it those men were lying in ambush?"

"I can explain that."

"You can?"

"I can."

"Will you?"

"I will."

"Do so."

"A man has been following and insulting me. We put up a scheme to punish him. You

came along and assaulted my brother, and our friends mistook you for the man we were seeking to punish."

"Your friends were not very valiant."

"I will admit that, sir."

"I am very sorry, miss, that I happened to interfere. I will confess I have made a mistake."

"Yes, you have made a grave mistake, and it would have been bad for you had an officer been near by."

"You will forgive me?"

"It makes little difference whether I do or not; but will you accompany me to my home?"

The detective was taken aback by this singular invitation.

"You wish me to accompany you to your home?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"You have given evidence that you can protect a lady. I am afraid to go alone through the streets at such an hour."

"I will be very happy to accompany you."

"You are a brave man."

The two started to walk together, and the detective said:

"Miss, this is very strange."

"What is very strange?"

"This request on your part."

"To accompany me?"

"Yes."

"When we reach my home, I will explain why I asked you to accompany me."

The detective calculated that another scheme was about to be put through, but he was up to all manner of schemes, and prepared to take all chances.

It was after eleven o'clock when the two reached the house from which the detective had shadowed the woman.

"Will you come in?" she asked.

Badger was taken aback.

"Do you really mean it?" he asked.

"Certainly I do. Have I not asked you to come in?"

The woman that the detective had first followed to that house was Kate Davis. He had recognized her at a glance. The woman who had come from the house was not Kate Davis, and that also the detective had discovered; but acting upon the supposition that Kate Davis was not aware of his presence in Philadelphia, he had followed the party who led him into the adventure he have described. His suspicion was that she was going to deliver a message, and his conclusion was based, as stated, on the belief that his presence was not known, and it was not singular that for the moment he was a little bewildered.

"What is your scheme?" he asked.

"My scheme?"

"Yes."

"I have no scheme. I desire to ask you a few questions."

"Ask them here."

"No; there are reasons why I desire that you should come into the house."

"I will enter," said Badger.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE detective was, indeed, a little off in his reckoning. The whole adventure was a strange one. He was shown into a neatly furnished parlor; the gas was turned up, the woman removed her wraps, and appeared cool and steady. She asked the detective to take a seat, seated herself, and then said:

"Now, sir, will you explain?"

"What am I to explain?"

"Your conduct."

"My conduct?"

"Yes, your conduct."

"What have I done?"

"You know well enough. You have been following me for the last three or four days."

A light began to break in upon Badger.

"I have been following you for the last three or four days?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are mistaken, miss."

"I am not mistaken, and I propose to have an explanation."

"I have no explanation to make."

"You shall explain."

"But you are mistaken."

"I am not mistaken. You followed me twice to-night."

"I followed you twice to-night?" repeated Badger.

"Yes, you did. I was walking along Chest-

out Street, and you followed me to this house. You had been following me, and I went out having previously arranged to have you punished. You are a valiant man. You vanquished my companions, and I have now determined to appeal to you directly. You must tell me why you have thus pursued me."

The detective was getting on to the scheme, and he said:

"I have been following a lady, but you are not the lady."

"You admit following a lady from Chestnut Street to this house to-night?"

"I do."

"I am the lady you followed, and I demand an explanation."

"You are not the lady I followed from Chestnut Street to this house."

"I am not?"

"No."

"Who was the lady?"

"Probably you know as well as I do."

"Mister Man, this is all very strange. You are either deceiving me, or you are laboring under a great mistake. I am the only lady in this house—only young lady. You are at liberty to go through the house and search for yourself."

"I have no desire to go through this house. I will admit I have made a mistake. Your word is sufficient for me."

"You will admit you have made a mistake?"

"Yes."

"Are you satisfied that you are mistaken?"

"Well enough satisfied to ask your pardon."

"Will you tell me the name of the lady you mistook me for?"

"I can not do that."

"Can I feel assured that I will not be annoyed any more?"

"You can."

"I will accept your word; but if you have any doubts, you are still at liberty to go through this house."

"I do not desire to go through this house, and having asked your pardon, I will bid you good-night."

The detective rose to go, and the woman said:

"I wish you would make a confidante of me."

"Why should I?"

"My curiosity is aroused. I will admit that I believe you made a mistake, and I am anxious to know why you should follow any lady as you have followed me."

A moment the detective pretended to meditate, and then said:

"I will trust you with my secret. I am in love."

The woman laughed, and said:

"If that is the way in which you mean to intrust me with your secret, you need proceed no further. I know you are not telling the truth."

"You know I am not telling the truth?"

"Yes."

"Then I will not attempt to proceed."

"I want you to proceed."

"You must excuse me. I will go."

"You are looking for a man, not a woman; and if you will make a confidante of me, I may put you on the track of that man."

"If I make a confidante of you, I will gain an aid?"

"Yes."

"Are these your only terms?"

"No."

"What further terms will you offer?"

"You are a detective."

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"What I state is correct."

"Then what you told me before is false."

"No, sir. I have just reached the conclusion that you are an officer. You are looking for a reward. You can afford to pay me for any good information. I want money, and I am prepared to earn it."

"And you can give me information?"

"Yes."

"Then you must know the man I want?"

"Possibly I suspect."

"Can you lead me into that man's presence?"

"I can."

"Who is the man?"

"His name is Davis."

The detective again was taken aback. He looked at the woman sharply, and finally said:

"You are a schemer."

"Yes, I am."

"You are a bold woman."

"Yes, I am."

"Your story to me was a blind."

"Yes, it was."

"And what now?"

"You have been fooled."

"Have I?"

"You have."

"How?"

"I may as well let it all out."

"Yes; let it all out."

"I am not the woman you followed from Chestnut Street."

"I knew that all along."

"I went from this house to mislead you."

"That is true."

"I succeeded."

"You did."

"You're beat as the game stands."

"It would so appear."

"You can search this house."

"I do not desire to do so. You are too willing to have me."

"I am looking for money."

"Indeed?"

"I am prepared to sell out—to peach. There is no money for me the other way."

"You go straight to business?"

"Yes, I do."

"And you can give me information?"

"Yes. I know more about this scheme now. I was not let into the business fully by the other side."

"Who are the real parties on the other side?"

"The woman you followed from Chestnut Street is one of them."

Badger was a little bewildered. He knew that a game was being played, and he muttered to himself:

"What in thunder is this woman up to, anyhow?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

THERE followed a moment's silence after Badger's comment, as recorded at the close of our preceding chapter, and it was the woman who broke the spell with the remark:

"I will not pretend to be too good to make a few dollars. I need money. I am under no obligations to Kate Davis."

Badger just stared.

"I played you. Yes, I entered into the scheme, but I had an eye to business on my own account when I did. I can surprise you."

"Can you?"

"Yes."

"You have already surprised me."

"I have a greater surprise for you."

"Proceed."

"You are a very smart man in your profession, but you have been working in the shade for the last three days."

"Have I?"

"You have."

"And can you remove the shadow?"

"I can open your eyes a bit."

"Will you?"

"I will."

"Do so."

"You left New York by the New Jersey Central three days ago, on the afternoon train. When you arrived in Philadelphia, you went direct to No. 200 — Street, and you have been floundering around in the dark until to-night, when you ran across Kate Davis, and you followed her to this house, and then you followed me. How is that? And here you are."

The detective listened with a feeling of amazement, and was also greatly mortified. He saw that he, an old detective among the most experienced in the profession, had been shadowed most successfully, while he had himself been at fault. Yes, he was greatly chagrined.

"You surprise me," he said.

"I knew I would."

There came a smile to the detective's face, and he said:

"You are a pretty smart woman."

The woman did not answer.

"You interest me. Now I will tell you something. I intended that your friends should know I came to Philadelphia."

"You did?"

"I did."

The woman did not look so well pleased.

"Why did you desire them to know you were coming to Philadelphia?"

"I wanted to draw them on here, and I succeeded. I openly went to 200 — Street. How is that?"

"And what have you made out?"

"Ah! now you ask too much."

"You have not got your man?"

"Not yet."

"You were pretty near to him."

"Was I?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"When I led you away."

"Ah, I see! There I was beat, I will admit."

"He is not here now?"

"Oh, no, certainly not."

"I know where he is, sir."

"You do?"

"I do."

"Well?"

"I am willing to give the whole business away."

"You are?"

"Yes."

"Proceed. I will be much obliged."

"I do not turn traitor for fun."

"Certainly not."

"I want money."

"Certainly; how much?"

"Two thousand."

"You shall have it."

"When?"

"As soon as you earn it."

"That will not suit me."

"That is the best I can do."

"I want the money now."

"You will have to wait, as far as I am concerned."

"If you do not catch that man within the next twenty-four hours, you will never get him."

"Then I will never get him."

"He is almost in your grasp now."

"Is that so?"

"It is; but he will never be caught unless you arrange with me."

"I'm prepared to arrange with you."

"Pay me the money and I will put you on the track of the man."

The detective meditated a moment, and then said:

"Will you take a part of the money?"

"I may be satisfied to take a part of the money. How much will you pay down?"

"Two hundred and fifty."

"Make it five hundred."

"Two hundred and fifty is all I will give."

"Will you pay the money now?"

"Yes."

"Give it to me."

"First, give me an idea that you can earn it."

"You lay me two hundred and fifty down, and promise to pay me twenty-seven hundred and fifty when the man is caught?"

"Yes."

"I will accept your offer. The man was in this house when Kate Davis entered here to-night."

"He was here then?"

"Yes."

"Where is he now?"

"Pretty near New York."

"And you can put me on his track in New York?"

"I can lead you right into his presence."

"And will you?"

"If you enter into the agreement."

The detective drew out his wallet, counted two hundred and fifty dollars, handed the money to the woman, and asked:

"When will you go to New York with me?"

"To-morrow."

"There is a train to-night."

"You would not ask a woman to travel at two o'clock in the morning?"

"Why not?"

"There will be nothing gained."

"At what hour will you go?"

"We will take the first train after seven o'clock."

The detective pretended to consider, and said, at length:

"It would be better to take the first train."

"No. I mean to put you on this man's track; but we must go slow. I can not walk right in on him."

"Then you will go on the first train immediately after seven o'clock?"

"Yes."

"Miss, you are a very smart woman. You have won my confidence. I admire your pluck. It is a good game you are playing—to look out for yourself."

"That is just what I mean to do."

"If you deliver this man to me, you shall receive your money on the spot."

"I shall expect to. I am taking large chances."

"I will meet you at the depot."

"I will be on hand."
 "You will not try any tricks?"
 "No. I want the money."

A little later the detective departed from the house, went direct to a telegraph office, and sent a cipher dispatch to Sleuth. And the dispatch, when interpreted, read:

"Come on at once."

Within an hour from the time Badger parted from the woman, Sleuth was on his way to Philadelphia.

CHAPTER XXX.

BADGER was an old-timer, and, next to Sleuth, probably as keen a man as there was in the profession. There are many very shrewd men, indeed. The business develops men, if there is anything in them to be developed. In some cities very inefficient men are sometimes appointed, but the majority of those who attain to the position of specials are able men.

Badger was not only an able man, but one of the most experienced men in the business. He was but a trifle behind Sleuth. He was not attached to the regular force, but was a worker on his own account, and he only took hold of very intricate, difficult cases.

He had been fooled, however, in spite of his great experience. He now realized that he had taken too much for granted. He did not go to Philadelphia openly, but sought to go there secretly, and when the woman let him know that he had been trailed and shadowed, he was really very much chagrined, and he had made up his mind that he would get down to his old-time gait, and take heed that he did not get outplayed a second time. When he told the woman he had left New York openly, that was merely a sharp corner. He proposed to turn; and when he left that woman's presence he was on to her scheme, or, at least, was determined not to be caught napping. He was sure to be on deck for any emergency, and he went to work the right way.

As stated, he telegraphed to New York for Sleuth. The two men had arranged a cipher, and Badger could have told volumes almost in a few words, and he did communicate considerable and really very startling information.

At the timeset, the detective was at the depot, and the woman, who called herself Jennie Franks, did not show up on time.

Badger walked up and down at the depot for over an hour, and still the woman did not appear.

"I do not like this," he remarked. "Can it be possible that I have been given the slip again? Hang it! if I have been played, I'll sell out—and go into some other business."

The detective waited another hour, and the woman did not show up, and he started to go away, when he caught sight of a young lad who appeared to be watching for an incoming train.

"Well, I'll be shot," muttered the old criminal shadower, "if that doesn't get me! Well, well, miss, what is your game?"

It did not take the detective long to discover the trick, and he again muttered:

"You are smart, but this time I'll fool you."

Badger did not go and address the disguised woman and unmask her. No, no; he had too good a lay for that, and he was too old a bird. He paid no attention to her at all, but he did not leave the depot. At length the train from New York arrived, and a crowd of passengers alighted, and among them was a man to whom the detective sent a signal as the crowd passed out from the depot. The detective had not, as it appeared, spoken to one of them, nor had he seemed to take any interest in the passengers. He did not look as though he were looking for an arrival. He hung around for another hour—indeed, half an hour after the pretended had had gone away—and then he sauntered from the depot and went down to the house at 200—Street. He hung around the house for about half an hour, when he espied a woman coming down the street. He recognized her as she approached him, and when she came close to him, the detective said:

"Well, madame, you played me a nice trick."
 "I was at the depot."
 "You were?"
 "I was."

"It's strange I did not see you, and I have been there for at least three hours."
 "I was there."

"We were to meet a train that leaves Philadelphia shortly after seven o'clock."

"I know it; but I overslept myself, and hurried to the depot as soon as I could."
 "I fear you have fooled me."
 "No, sir."
 "You have my money. You did me up I fear."

"No, sir."
 "And do you intend to go to New York?"
 "I do, sir."
 "And earn the balance of the reward?"
 "Yes, sir; and, to tell the truth, it is about as well that we did not go on the morning train."

"It is?"
 "Yes. I told you, when last we met, there was no hurry."

"You are up to some game."
 "I am?"
 "Yes."
 "What game could I be up to, sir?"
 "I see through it all."
 "You do?"
 "I do."

The woman smiled, and said:
 "You are really a very smart man, but you are mistaken for once."

"It may prove bad for you, this trick."
 "What trick?"
 "The trick you have played on me."
 "What trick have I played?"
 "You are under contract to keep me here in Philadelphia. That man is in New York. He will have a chance to skip away, while I am being fooled here by you."

There came a pleased look to the woman's face. The detective observed it, but gave no sign.

"You are mistaken," said the woman.
 "Do you intend to go to New York?"

"Yes."
 "When?"
 "Any time you name."
 "And you will meet me at the depot?"
 "Yes."

"And give me another wait?"
 "No; I will be ready to go."
 "On what train shall we go?"
 "We will take an afternoon train."

"And you will be on hand?"
 "I will."
 "You are ready to go?"
 "I am."
 "At once?"
 "Yes."

"Then we will spend the time together until the train starts."

"You suspect me?"
 "I do."
 "You need not; I will be on hand."
 "But can we not spend the time together?"
 "No."

"Why not?"
 "You are a very entertaining man, but I am a dull woman."

"Oh, you underrate yourself."
 "I will meet you."
 "Sure?"
 "Yes."

"No more fooling?"
 "No."
 "I shall take the train named, whether you appear or not."

"I will be on hand."
 "All right; I will take your word. Do not fool me again."

"I will not."

Badger walked away, and as he did so, he muttered:
 "I reckon I was the smartest this time."

CHAPTER XXXI.

BADGER was on to the woman's game. He had been fooled, and he did not mean to get the throw-out again. He did not wish to spend the time with her, either. His proposition was a misleader; and when he walked away, he just wandered around and kept his eyes open, and when an opportunity offered he worked a transform. He was among the princes of change detectives, and could do the act as deftly and as completely as any man living.

Having worked his change, he took a walk down past the woman's house, and luck favored him. She was just coming forth. She met the detective face to face. He was on the lookout. He passed on, and muttered:
 "That's all right. I reckon I'm under a good cover."

The detective continued on his way, walked down to the river, then jumped into a car, and rode to a hotel in a remote part of the city. He

alighted, glanced around, concluded, as indicated by an exclamation, that it was all right, and entered the hotel. A brisk, business-like looking man sat in the reading-room, looking over a paper. Badger did not address the man, but took up a paper himself and pretended to read, and after an interval he turned toward the other man, and remarked:

"I see wheat has taken a tumble."
 "Yes," came the answer.

The two men were soon engaged discussing affairs about the Produce Exchange in New York, and suddenly discovered that they had met before. Then they drew their chairs together and commenced talking in a very low tone, and the man who had been in the reading-room asked:

"How is it you didn't go to New York?"
 "They're smart."
 "Yes; they're a cute lot."
 "She made an arrangement to go to New York with me."

"And didn't show up?"
 "She did, and she didn't. She came in disguise to watch me."

"Aha!"
 "Yes; she fell to a possibility."
 "I see."
 "She is off the track now."
 "You are sure?"
 "I am."

"When do you go?"
 "On the afternoon train."
 "And what is your idea?"
 "He didn't go to New York."

"I reckon not."
 "He is here."
 "Yes."

"He will come from his hole."
 "I see."

"They think now that I'm the only representative from New York."

"Yes."

"They mean to get me back to the city and let him out of his hole."

"And then?"
 "It is my idea he means to skip."
 "Have you got on to him?"
 "No; but I've an idea."

"Well?"
 "He will take a boat."
 "That is a good supposition."
 "He will think the road is clear."

"Yes."
 "You will know where to look?"
 "I will."

"They, meantime, will fool around with me in New York."

"They are playing it cute."
 "Yes; but I know we are on to the whole scheme."

"I think we are. There is no idea of my presence here?"
 "No."

Old Sleuth laughed, and said:
 "They will see me in New York."
 "When?"

"Well, they saw me an hour ago."
 Badger laughed, and said:
 "You are the devil himself."

"I anticipated this trick."
 "They will be doubly sure that you are not here."

"I tell you they will see me in New York."

A few moments later Badger and Old Sleuth separated, and a little later Sleuth was in the street. He proceeded direct to the main telegraph office. He held a long talk with the superintendent, and a secret order was sent out to send word to the office if a cipher dispatch arrived from New York under certain conditions, and also if a dispatch arrived with a message approximating a meaning to any of the lists of warnings that were furnished.

Having fixed up for a clew at the telegraph office, Sleuth took a stroll about the city. He went down to several shipping offices, and each time had a talk with the chief in charge. He obtained a list of all the passages that had been engaged for boats going in various directions, and after leaving the last one, he remarked:

"He has not secured his passage yet."

Sleuth returned to his hotel. His lines were all out for a bite, and it would be a smart Davis who would get away in face of the precautions the great thief-taker had taken.

Meantime, Badger was laying around, and at the proper time he appeared at the depot, and the woman, Jennie Franks, showed up on time.

"It's a go this time?" said Badger.
 "Yes, it's a go," answered the woman.
 "And I am to see the man?"

"When?"
 "This very night, in all probability."
 "Good enough."
 The parties boarded the train and were soon rushing toward New York, where they arrived a little before seven o'clock.
 "Here we are," said Badger, as they alighted from the train.
 "Yes, sir; we are here."
 "And now, what is the programme?"
 "I must arrange matters."
 "Well?"
 "I will meet you at midnight."
 "You will meet me at midnight?"
 "Yes."
 "Madame, what is your game?"
 "I mean to earn that money."
 "You can?"
 "Certainly."
 "And at once?"
 "I must arrange matters."
 "You know where the man is?"
 "I will know."
 "You don't know now?"
 "No; of course not. I only know that he is in New York; but I will know where he is within an hour, and I will meet you to-night."
 "Where?"
 The woman named a place.
 "You will be on hand?"
 "Yes."
 "Very well, so shall I."
 "And now I've a condition to make. You must not cross in the same boat with me."
 "Why not?"
 "It is my condition."
 "When can I cross?"
 "In the following boat."
 Badger laughed, and said:
 "That's all right."

CHAPTER XXXII.

WE will here indicate how many points a good detective is compelled to watch, and how much thoughtfulness it requires to successfully conduct a shadow.
 Badger did not know that the woman would request him to wait over a boat; but he did anticipate that in some way she would seek to evade him, and he felt compelled to prepare for such a contingency. When the train arrived, he exchanged signals with a man who had met the train at New Brunswick. The detective and this man had exchanged communications unknown to the woman who was in his company, and when the woman proposed that he should wait over a boat, he saw the wisdom of his little precaution, and when he said, "That's all right," he meant, *sub rosa*, that it was all right in two ways. He was ready for the play.
 "You must not suspect me," said the woman.
 "Suspect you?"
 "Yes."
 "How?"
 "I want you to fully understand that I mean to keep my contract."
 "That will do."
 "I mean nothing when I ask you to wait over a boat."
 "I've no objection to wait over a boat."
 "I may be watched."
 "Ah! I see."
 "They may not have such perfect confidence in me as I might expect."
 "I see."
 "That is the reason I ask you to remain over."
 "All right; I am agreed. We meet at midnight."
 "Yes."
 "I will be on deck. And, madame, do not attempt any little game."
 "I know better than that."
 "You will slip up, if you do."
 "I know with whom I am dealing."
 "All right. It will be but child's play for me to win over any little trickery."
 "You needn't fear."
 "No, I do not."
 The two parted. The conversation we have indicated in a few moments, as they were walking from the landing platform to the boat. The woman went aboard, and Badger stood behind, and stood on the bridge in full view, so the woman could plainly see that he was keeping his word, demonstrating that it was impossible for him to reach New York as soon as she would.

It was fifteen minutes later when he arrived in New York. He proceeded direct to his room.
 In the meantime, the woman went direct to the home of Kate Davis. She gained admittance, and was greeted with a kiss and an embrace.
 "You are here."
 "I am."
 "And where is Badger?"
 "He is here also."
 "He came on with you?"
 "Yes."
 "Did you follow all directions?"
 "Yes."
 "I'm satisfied it is all right. The other man is here in New York. I saw him with my own eyes."
 "How late?"
 "I saw him as late as five o'clock."
 "No one came on the train to Philadelphia?"
 "No one."
 "You are sure?"
 "I am."
 "Then the road is clear?"
 "It is. Now tell me all that occurred."
 The woman told all that had occurred. She went over all the facts that are already known to our readers.
 "And you are to meet him at midnight?"
 "Yes."
 The woman, Kate Davis, laughed and said:
 "It's all right. I said I would tangle them up. I'm about to play the biggest scheme ever conceived in a human brain. They are smart men, but a hundred years from now they may know how they were beaten by a poor little woman."
 "Is your dummy ready?"
 "He is."
 "And I will earn the money?"
 "Yes."
 "He may not pay it to me."
 "He will; those men always keep an agreement, and you will keep yours."
 "I will keep mine?"
 "Yes."
 "What do you mean?"
 "Just what I say."
 "But I've promised to show up Davis."
 "I know it."
 "He will go through your dummy."
 "Will he?"
 "Most certainly. We can not fool men like Badger."
 "We have fooled them."
 "Just a little."
 "We will fool them again, and this time fool them completely."
 "What am I to do?"
 "Fulfill your contract."
 "How?"
 "The man will be there?"
 "Open up the game."
 "You are to meet this man at midnight?"
 "Yes."
 "You are under contract to point out the man Davis?"
 "That is it."
 "You will?"
 "I will point out the dummy."
 "No; you will point out Davis."
 "I don't understand."
 "That is what you have agreed to do?"
 "Yes."
 "When you meet him, tell him you are to meet Davis."
 "Yes."
 "Agree with him that you will engage in conversation with Davis."
 "Yes."
 "He is to come up?"
 "Yes."
 "It will come as though you are surprised."
 "I see. He must think I am a traitor."
 "Yes; and you must be permitted to go away."
 "Yes."
 "And after you have gone away he is to follow up his man."
 "I see."
 "That is all you have to do. Leave the rest to me."
 "I can do my part; but how about the money he is to pay me?"
 "You will earn your money, and he will pay you."
 "But he will go through the game."
 "You will get your money. All you have to do is follow my instructions."
 "And shall I not insist upon the payment of the money?"
 "No; all will be right."

"Do you mean to use me and let me lose the money?"
 "No."
 "I can not see through your game."
 "You will see through it all right in the end. I tell you I am playing the biggest game that was ever played. I will even win the love and respect of those two men, I will tangle them so completely."
 "Very well; I will trust your word."
 "You can. We will be all right, and to-night will practically end the whole business. There will be some fine work later on, but to-night will do the business. Yes, those men shall be fooled as men were never fooled before."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BADGER, as has been stated, crossed the ferry leisurely and proceeded to his lodgings, and there he sat and awaited a report from his aid.
 It was well on toward nine o'clock when his aid returned.
 "Did you shadow the woman?"
 "I did."
 "Where did she fetch up?"
 "At the home of the woman, Kate Davis."
 "What did you make out?"
 "I could not get on to their conversation."
 "They held one?"
 "Oh, yes; I could see through the windows; but that woman is smart."
 "Yes; she is a smart woman."
 "She had watchers outside."
 The detective meditated a moment; and then asked:
 "Are you sure?"
 "I am."
 "I don't like that," he muttered.
 "She is a daisy, and she is glad about something."
 "Is she?"
 "Yes."
 "How do you know?"
 "I could see she was smiling all over."
 The detective smiled, and said:
 "All right; it is better to laugh last."
 It was midnight when the detective met the woman Jennie Franks. She was promptly on hand, and she said:
 "You are satisfied now?"
 "How?"
 "That I mean business."
 "So far—yes."
 "I will show up that man to-night."
 "That is what you promised."
 "How about my reward?"
 "That will be all right."
 "But the plan will not permit you to pay me right down unless you trust me."
 "What is the plan?"
 "I have made an arrangement to meet Davis. I run great risk."
 "You are to meet him?"
 "Yes."
 "When?"
 "Within the hour."
 "Well?"
 "You are to follow me up. You will find me talking with a man who will be under cover. The man you will see me talking with will be Davis."
 "Good enough."
 "He will know immediately afterward that I have betrayed him."
 "Yes, if it is the real Davis."
 "You can see, then, what a position I will be in."
 "What position?"
 "My life will not be worth a rupee; that woman, Kate Davis, will kill me."
 "You need not fear."
 "Oh, it is easy for you to say I need not fear, but you do not know those people as I do, sir. I must get away immediately."
 "No need to get away."
 "Why not?"
 "If you show up Davis, you will have nothing to fear from him for the next twenty years."
 "But his wife?"
 "She will be out of the way for doing harm also."
 "If you pay me my money now, I know I will be all right."
 "That will not work. You can not receive any more money until I have seen Davis with my own eyes."
 "After you see him?"
 "I will pay you the money agreed upon."
 "I can depend upon your promise?"
 "You can."

When the boat was well out in the slip the detective lit a cigar and walked away, and

"I see one thing; you do not believe I will keep faith."

"I believe nothing until I have the actual proofs."

"You will have the proofs; but, let me ask, will you arrest the man at once?"

"That depends."

"I will offer a suggestion."

"Do so."

"You want the bonds as well as Davis?"

"Yes."

"By arresting him to-night, you will not secure the bonds. He will not have them on his person."

"Well?"

"The woman will outwit you."

"You were to offer a suggestion."

"Yes."

"Do so."

"Spot him, and then shadow him. When you once have your eye on him, there is no need for you ever to lose sight of him."

"That should be so."

"What will you do?"

"I shall decide later on."

"And you will pay me immediately after you are convinced that I have kept my contract?"

"Yes."

"The time approaches."

"When you are to meet this man?"

"Yes."

"Remember, it will be bad for you if you attempt any tricks."

"I will not attempt any tricks against a man like you. I know you are prepared."

"I am."

"It is a square deal. I am to show up the man, and you are to pay me."

"That is the understanding. Where are you to meet him?"

"You must shadow me, and the man you will see me talking with will be your man. You must arrange it so it will appear that you were on his track, and give me thereby a chance to dodge."

"That is a fair request."

"You will work it that way?"

"Certainly."

"I may have to wait some time for my man."

"All right."

"Meantime, you must lay low."

"I will take care of that part of the game."

"You must be very careful."

"Certainly."

"He will be on his guard."

"Most likely."

"I will go at once."

"Go it, madame; and if you do not give anything away, you may depend I will not."

The woman started and walked away. The detective started slowly to follow her, and in the meantime he passed a signal.

Badger did not know just what the game was. He had calculated upon two plans. He intended to be prepared for either. He thought it possible the woman might have a dummy made up. He was ready for that game. He thought again that it was possible that the people would be rash enough to attempt to down him. He was ready for that game. They knew they had a desperate case and might attempt desperate chances. That was one thing he had no faith in—the fidelity of the woman Jennie Franks. He knew she was up to some trick.

The woman walked very slowly, and the detective kept her in sight. She at length came to a halt in a remote corner of Tompkins Park. The position selected by her was a good one, as it afforded the detective a good chance for seeking a cover. She paced to and fro, and finally the detective, thinking that possibly she was really to meet a dummy, managed to pass her, and as he did so he said:

"Talk with your man and leave him. Let me follow him up; it will be better for you."

"The plan suits me," said the woman.

"Yes; and it will establish your desire to make it appear that I have been shadowing him."

"I see your point. I am to talk with him awhile, and then leave him?"

"Yes."

"And you will follow him up after I have separated from him?"

"Yes."

"I like that plan better."

The detective passed on, and he concluded then that it really was the dummy game that was to be played, and he smiled at the idea that the woman, smart as the two were he was dealing

with, believed that they could fool him. But he did not know the game that was to be played. It was a deep one, as our readers will learn.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BADGER got to his cover, and fully half an hour passed, when at length a man appeared and held a few moments' conversation with the woman Jennie Franks, and as the detective glanced at the fellow by the aid of a park lamp, he muttered:

"Hang it! the fellow is not well got up."

The man was partly under cover, and that was what the detective could not understand.

He did not look like Davis as closely as he should.

"This is a very clumsy game," he muttered. Alas! Badger has not got on to the full depth of the game. It was not as clumsy as he supposed—as he was to learn later on; but as matters stood, he looked upon the whole play as a sort of broad farce.

The woman, as far as she was concerned, played her part well. She only talked with the man a few moments, and talked loud enough for our hero to overhear. She said:

"I have nothing to report that is definite."

"You left Philadelphia this afternoon?"

"Yes."

"You brought that man on with you, I hear?"

"It was according to orders."

"Who gave the orders?"

"Kate."

"She is a fool!"

"Why?"

"She should have left the man there."

"Her game is a good one. She told it to me."

"What is her game?"

"You are to return. The road will be clear."

"This has been badly managed by Kate all through. If she had not mismanaged, those fellows would never have got on to the original game."

"You must make the best of it now, and everything will come out all right. You must not question what your wife does. She is a wonderfully smart woman. She will fool all these men in the end."

The last remark was spoken in a low tone, and Badger did not overhear all that was said.

"When will I see Kate?" asked the man.

"To-morrow, most likely."

"She will spoil all, I fear."

"You need not fear."

"Am I to meet you again?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"You will receive word."

"How do you know you have not been shadowed?"

"I arranged against that."

"How?"

"The man is waiting for me at another place. He expects information; and now you had better go."

"You go first. I will follow at my leisure."

"Good-night," said the woman.

The woman went away, and the man stood some time as though lost in deep thought, and in the meantime Badger had a good opportunity to study him up. The fellow was evidently under a disguise. He looked something like Davis, but he had not been well made up as a dummy, and the detective was perplexed.

"Hang it!" he muttered, as a certain suspicion flashed through his mind. "I may have been badly played, after all. There is something in this little movement that I am not on to yet."

The man finally started to walk away, and Badger fell to his trail. The man proceeded to a small restaurant, an all-night place, and the resort of bad people. It was a very low resort.

"There is something up," muttered Badger, as he worked a transform and passed the place. He had seen the man enter, and saw that he was in a little booth, and had evidently ordered a meal.

The detective entered the place. He played as though he were intoxicated, and staggered into the same booth where the man was enjoying a cup of coffee. The detective ordered a cup of coffee also, and looked at the other occupant of the booth, and as he did so it seemed to him as though he were gazing at a ghost. He did not betray his surprise, but he was a really surprised man—all at once.

"Great guns!" was his mental comment, "what have I struck?"

Our hero had a square look at the man. The place was moderately well lighted. The man was under a disguise, that was certain; but his disguise did not aid to make him look like Davis. The remarkable fact was developed that the man was really disguised not to look like Davis. Again the detective indulged a mental comment—a sort of query—and it was to the effect, "Has that woman really betrayed Davis into my hands?"

Badger still assumed to be intoxicated, and he addressed his companion.

"How is that coffee?" he asked.

"Pretty good."

"How are you, old man?"

The stranger did not offer to take Badger's proffered hand.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"You are not going back on an old acquaintance?"

"I don't know you."

"You don't know me?"

"No."

"Yes, you do."

"Oh, don't bother me."

"Who's bothering?"

"You are annoying me."

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"You're awful touchy."

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"Don't be so touchy. Coffee is no good; let's have some beer."

"I don't want any beer."

"You don't? What's the matter with you, anyhow?"

"Nothing."

"You don't want to be friendly?"

"No."

"I guess I've seen you before?"

"Oh, hush!"

"You're no good."

"Are you seeking to quarrel with me?"

"I'd just like to quarrel with you, old man."

"You can't."

"So I see. You're afraid you might lose your wig in the scuffle."

"Who are you, anyhow?"

"I'm an old-timer. I say, Johnny, you need not fear me. I am not giving any one away. I've been there myself."

"What in thunder are you talking about, anyhow?"

"Don't you know?"

"I don't."

Badger laughed, and said:

"You have not worked it well."

"I reckon you are crazy."

"No, I am not crazy; but you haven't worked it well."

"What I've done suits me."

"But some one may get on to you."

"They may?"

"Yes."

"What are you getting at, anyhow?"

"You're under cover, pard," came the answer.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE man pretended to show great alarm, and said:

"You're a fool!"

"Not much. And now, mister, I know you."

"You know me, eh?"

"Yes."

"I don't know you."

"Don't you?"

"No."

"Let's pull."

"What do you mean?"

"Bah! you know."

"I only know you're a fool."

"That don't help. See here."

As the detective spoke, he reached forward and pulled off the man's wig. And there, indeed, Davis, the supposed suicide, sat before him. Our hero was a more amazed man than the fellow he had uncovered. Badger, however, did not lose his head, although greatly amazed, but said:

"Excuse me, old man; I give it up."

"Eh?"

"I give it up."

"What are you up to, anyhow? You have taken great liberties with me."

"You are not the man I took you to be."

"You thought you knew me?"

"Yes."

"And I am not the man you took me to be?"
 "No."
 Badger had cast aside all attempts to play the drunken man.
 "You've got sober very quick."
 "Yes, I am sober."
 "You were running in on me?"
 "Yes."
 "Well?"
 "You are not the man I want to see. I've a friend here in New York under cover. I've big news for him. I've been on the lay for him. I thought you were my man, but I'm away off. I beg your pardon."
 It was the man whom our hero had uncovered who showed signs of perplexity.
 "So you are looking for a friend?"
 "Yes."
 "You thought I was your friend?"
 "I did."
 "You are now satisfied you are mistaken?"
 "Yes."
 "We will call it quits."
 "Certainly."

Badger finished his coffee; but while sipping it he had been thinking. He was more surprised and knocked out at that moment than he had ever been before in all his life. At that moment he knew it was the man Davis who sat before him. He had not been prepared to meet Davis. He had made no plans for such a *dé-nouement*. He had not dreamed for one moment that the woman really intended to betray the man, and yet there sat Davis. His disguise, as has been indicated, was to hide Davis. There was something in the whole affair that for the time being was too much for the experienced old detective.

A few moments the two men sat in silence, and it was Davis who first spoke. He said:
 "Say, old man, what is your game?"
 "I've no game."
 The detective was on the defensive.
 "You have been dogging me."
 "Yes, I have been dogging you."
 "For how long a time?"
 "A few hours."
 "You took me for another man?"
 "Yes."
 "Whom did you take me for?"
 "I am not telling to-night."
 "But you can not fool me."
 "I can't fool you?"
 "No."
 "I am not trying to fool you. I've fooled myself."

"I am the man you were looking for."
 "Are you?"
 "Yes."
 "Who are you?"
 "What's your game?"
 "I've told you my game. You are not the man I want to see. I've no business with you, and I'll bid you good-night."

Badger rose, went over and paid his check, and left the saloon, and as he stepped out to the street, he muttered:

"Well, this is the worst beat of my life. I wonder what that fellow thinks? He acted sort of queer. It's Davis. He was right in my grasp. It was no make-up. Hang it! the discovery took my breath away. I wish I had known that woman was on the square, and I would have arranged my plan differently."

The detective walked off a little way and worked a transform, and then he laid low.

Meantime, the man whom he had uncovered did a little muttering. He also ejaculated:

"This gets me! What does he mean? Why didn't he clap the irons on me? By all that's strange, but I'd like to know the game!"

The man at length rose from his seat and settled his check; he had restored his wig, and came forth from the saloon. He proceeded along like a man who knew just where he was going.

Badger started for a shadow. He followed the man, and saw him enter the house of Kate Davis, and then he began to think.

"There is something wrong here," he muttered. "I am not on to this game yet. No, no; but I will be, you bet."

The detective went away. He knew how and where to communicate with Old Sleuth, and when an hour he had telegraphed on the usual particulars. Sleuth was at one end of the wire, Badger at the other, and the two detectives were their own operators, and they communicated as though they were talking.

Some more and strange suggestions and questions had come along, carried by the electric waves.

The two officers held the wire for over an hour, and the marvelous part of the whole dialogue was summed up in the fact that Badger had been face to face with Davis in New York, while Sleuth had been face to face with Davis in Philadelphia, and both men were fully assured that they were not mistaken.

The two men at length departed from the electric communication. Badger went to his lodgings, and Sleuth went on a prow, and we will relate his marvelous adventures later on. In the meantime, the man Davis, as has been indicated, had entered the home of Kate Davis, and when he stood in the presence of the two women he had a perplexed look upon his face, and the women wore a look of surprise.

"What are you doing here?" cried the woman Kate Davis.

"I am here," came the answer.

"Yes, I see you are here. Didn't that man follow you?"

"Yes, he followed me."

"Didn't he uncover you?"

"Yes, he uncovered me."

"And still you are here?"

"Yes, I am here."

"Great goodness! what have you to say? Why did he not arrest you?" came the question.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THERE was something singularly significant in the woman's question, as recorded at the close of our preceding chapter.

"Why did he not arrest you?" was the woman's query.

"I don't know," came the answer.

"He followed you?"

"Yes."

"And uncovered you?"

"Yes. He tore off my wig."

"You are Davis?"

"I am."

"And he did not denounce you as Davis?"

"No."

"What did he say?"

"He said he had made a mistake, and apologized. He said I was not the man he was looking for."

The two women gazed into each other's faces, and after a bit Kate said:

"Tell us all that occurred."

The man related all that had occurred. The woman listened attentively, and finally said:

"It's all right."

"It is?"

"Yes; I begin to see through it all."

"It has a bad look," said Jennie.

"No; it's all right unless my instructions did not go far enough. It was all right up to a certain point."

"How is it all right?"

"That man was fooled; but he is deep—yes, very deep. Oh, had I only known what his play would be!"

"Will you explain?"

"It is not Davis those men want alone. They want those bonds. Badger is a deep man. He did not expect to see Davis, and when he did he was taken aback. But he is a good one, he is. He recovered from his surprise, and he has played it well. He led off for a blind, and he started in to trail Davis. It's the bonds he wants."

"Yes; and if he did as you say, he has trailed Davis to this house."

"That is so, and that is bad. Davis should have known better than to come here."

"I did not know what to do under the circumstances," said the man.

"That is so. I should have been on my guard for a game like this. But it is all right. He will want you. Yes, I will know how to fool him. Now let him dog you. That is just the game. It will suit as well as though he had worked the other trick."

A moment the three people were silent, and then Jennie said:

"We don't know yet just what their game is."

"We can soon find out. That man is watching this house now. He knows Davis will not remain here."

"Suppose he is?"

"We will fool him."

"How?"

"Davis must go out. The man will follow to shadow. It's the bonds they want. You can follow, too—a double shadow, and you will prove my conclusion."

It was arranged that Davis should go to the street, which he did, and the woman Jennie

slipped out for a double shadow. Davis walked along openly, and Jennie stole after him; but no Badger turned up, and in due time Jennie returned and so reported.

"Are you sure no one followed him?"

"I am."

"This is something I do not understand."

"I has a bad look."

"It has."

"It can not be possible that he has tumbled."

"If he has a game, he is going in deeper than I can fathom."

"They are wonderful men."

"They are; and if you had found Badger following Davis I would have been encouraged, but now I do not know what to think. I am all at sea."

"Can it be possible?"

"Can what be possible?"

"That I was fooled, after all."

"When and where?"

"In Philadelphia."

"How do you mean?"

"Can it be possible there were two of them there at the same time?"

"It is possible. But then again, remember I saw Sleuth in New York."

"What will you do now?"

"Go to bed."

"And then?"

"To-morrow I will put matters to the full test. We are to win or to lose to-morrow."

"I fear," said Jennie.

"What do you fear?"

"That we have already lost. Yours was a great scheme—it seems to have failed."

"I do not admit it has failed yet."

Upon the day following the incidents we have described, Badger was on the street, and in due time he met Jennie Franks.

"I am glad I have met you," said the woman.

"Are you?"

"Yes. I have earned my reward. I am liable to be discovered at any moment; I am already suspected."

"You are?"

"Yes."

"That's bad."

"I kept my contract, did I not?"

"It would appear so," answered Badger.

"Do you mean to balk me that way?"

"How?"

"You are playing off already."

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I asked you if I had not kept my contract."

"Yes."

"You answer: 'It would appear so.'"

"That was my answer."

"And what do you mean?"

"Just what I say."

"Then I have really earned my money?"

"It would appear so."

"Did I not put you on the track of Davis?"

"It would appear so."

"Will you speak plainly?"

"I am speaking plainly."

"You say it would appear so."

"Yes."

"Do you mean to imply that it was not Davis whom I pointed out to you last night?"

"It would appear so. It was the man Davis."

"You know it was Davis?"

There came a peculiar smile over the detective's features, as he asked:

"Which Davis?"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE woman gave a start when the detective asked the strange question, "Which Davis?" and when she recovered her breath, she said:

"You do not intend to pay me now?"

"No."

The two separated, and Badger smiled as he muttered:

"Oh, no, gals; you can't work that on me."

While the incidents we have described were occurring in New York, Old Sleuth was busy in Philadelphia, as our readers will remember. He had taken certain precautions, and in due time he received a note including a telegram, which read as follows:

"NEW YORK.

"Road clear. Go."

"[Signed] P."

"Ah!" ejaculated the great thief-taker, as he read the telegram and permitted a pained gleam to shine in his eyes. "Yes, yes," he

said: "the road is clear; but, Johnny, I reckon I will be at the gate as you pass out."

The detective had got himself up in good form. He had studied up the pedigree of the man he was after, and at the time knew all about his past history, and had learned who had been his most intimate associates.

Having read the telegram, he started out upon the street, and went down to the shipping-offices, and he kept moving around from one to the other. He had made his arrangements, had several aids on the lookout, and was prepared for a signal at any moment. No signal came. The detective had spent the whole day on the lookout, and started to return to his home. He was greatly disappointed, and muttered:

"I wonder if I have made a miscalculation? I think not."

He was still thinking over the situation, and while doing so he walked toward the depot. He knew it was about time for a train to arrive from New York. The train arrived on time. The detective stood watching the passengers from a point where he could not be seen, and he saw an old lady alight from the train. She asked several questions of a porter, and then shuffled away.

Sleuth saw the old lady the moment she stepped off the train, and he muttered:

"Good enough! I thought 't possible."

The old woman, as stated, shuffled away, and the detective stole after her, and again he muttered:

"You are a good one; but I am on to you, madame. It is just as I thought it might be, and now I've got you."

The old lady passed from the depot and took a street-car. She rode along a few squares and alighted. The detective was on hand. She started to walk, and played her game well, actually stopping to ask questions. And again the detective communed with himself, saying:

"I wonder if she fears being followed here? I thought she had the road clear. Well, well! she does it finely, but she can't fool me."

The old woman made her way down toward the river, and finally entered a house in a low quarter. The detective was on hand, and as the woman disappeared he stood a moment, seemingly lost in thought, and then he made a motion which to an observer would appear as though he were suffering from a sudden vertigo. But the motion meant something. A man passed along, and as he arrived opposite to where Sleuth stood, the latter said:

"When the woman comes out, I will follow her."

"All right, sir."

"You will lay around here?"

"Yes, sir."

"If a man comes from that house, arrest him."

"All right, sir."

"Make sure that no one leaves there and steps by you."

"I will look out, sir."

"Good enough."

The man passed; he had not even stopped while receiving his orders. He had merely walked slowly, and had pretended to be looking for a certain number.

Our readers will observe how little a real first-class officer can take for granted, and how necessary it is to be on guard at every moment and at every point.

As stated, the man passed on, and Sleuth went to cover. He lay around for fully three hours, and during that time was as silent as a statue. It was an old game for him. He had learned patience and endurance, and he could have gone on waiting and watching for days had it been necessary, but after three hours he was relieved. Not the old woman, but a young woman came forth from the house, and again Sleuth muttered:

"By ginger! how easily those women would fool a young man; but, madame, you can't fool me. I've been there."

The woman passed along the street, and the detective, before proceeding to follow, worked one of his magic changes, and then he fell to the shadow. The woman was very wary. She went up one street and down another, and the detective did not follow her too closely, but was very particular to guard against her giving him the slip, and he muttered:

"She does act as though she knew some one was on her track. If she does not suspect, she is taking the most wonderful precautions, that's all."

At length she started in one direction and

held to a straight course, and again the old detective assured himself with the remark:

"Now it's a go."

And, indeed, go it proved. The woman went straight to the house, 200 — Street, and she entered it. The detective had knowledge of this house. He had improved an opportunity to study it well, and the woman had not been five minutes in the house ere Sleuth had gained an entrance. He looked in the parlor, and then passed up the stairs, and with his wonderful power of observation, decided upon which room the woman was in, although both doors were closed.

The detective entered the adjoining room, and he did it so noiselessly that he would not have startled a mouse. Once in the room, he set himself to watch at the key-hole of the door between the two rooms. He saw the woman. She was seated in a chair. She was evidently very much fatigued, and he heard her mutter:

"It is all right so far. I will look out for myself. I have taken chances enough."

She spoke in a very low tone, and sat for fully ten minutes without moving, and then again muttered:

"I wonder where Alice can be? Can it be possible she will not return until well on toward morning?"

The woman appeared to consider, and finally said:

"It is just as well. It may not be safe for me to remain here. I will go."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It was evident the woman believed herself to be alone in the house. She had determined to go away. The detective decided to interview her before she made a change, and he opened the door and stood before her. The woman uttered a suppressed scream.

"Don't scream, sis," said the detective.

"Who are you? Robber, leave at once, or I will summon the police."

"All right, Kate. Summon the police if you want to go back on an old friend that way; but I've come to tell you some very sad news."

"You have come to tell me some very sad news?"

"Yes."

"Who are you, and what have you to tell me?"

"Jim has been run down."

"Jim has been run down?"

"Yes; Jim led the cops to his lair. He believes you betrayed him. It looks that way. You got the papes, and the next moment after you leave him he is nipped. I got away by the skin of my teeth; but when he knew all was up he ordered me to come here and get the papes back from you."

The woman's face was a study, but she was cool. She was, indeed, a woman of great nerve.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"Oh, I am a friend of the family."

"Let me look at your face. You are under cover."

"Certainly I am under cover. Do you suppose I've been hiding with Jim all these weeks, to be nipped at the last moment?"

The woman approached closer and closer, as though desirous of peering more closely into the man's face. Her own features were set, and on them was to be witnessed a look of desperate determination. She got close to her visitor, and then suddenly leaped forward. In her hand was a poniard. She made a stroke. But it was Old Sleuth with whom she was dealing. He, like Badger, had been there before. It would take more than a woman to get a knife into his heart so easily. Indeed, he had read her purpose, and he permitted her to approach. He was ready to let her strike, and then ward off the blow at the last moment. He was prepared, as intimated, and as she made the stroke he stepped to one side, caught her wrist, gave her arm a twist, and the poniard fell from her grasp, as she uttered a cry of pain.

"That is not the way to treat a friend, Kate."

"Curse you!" muttered the woman, between her clinched teeth.

"Why should you curse me?"

"I know you."

"Do you?"

"Yes, curse you!"

"As you know me, I need not announce myself."

"That chicken-hearted fool, Jim, has betrayed me."

"No; you betrayed Jim."

"It's false!"

"Oh, yes, you did. I was at the train when you arrived."

"You were?"

"Oh, yes! I saw the feeble old woman alight. It was easy to follow her, she was so feeble."

"You are not Badger?"

"No."

"Who are you?"

"I am not Badger."

"What do you want?"

"I want those papes."

"What papes?"

"The ones you just got from Jim."

"I told you Jim had betrayed me."

"No, you betrayed Jim."

"But he squealed."

"No."

"You can not fool me. Who are you?"

"It does not matter. I'll have those papes."

The woman laughed and said:

"You may have me, but you have not got the papes yet, nor will you get them."

"Oh, yes; I've you and the papes also."

"No, sir. But who are you?"

"Oh, I'm one of them."

"You will never get the papes, unless—"

The woman stopped short.

"Speak out."

"Unless you make terms with me."

"What terms would you make?"

"You can make a big haul."

"Can I?"

"Yes, for yourself."

"How?"

"I will divide with you. We will skip together."

"But we can't turn the papes into money."

"Yes, we can."

"Have you arranged for that?"

"I have."

"There is one thing in the way of any arrangement, madame."

"There is?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"I'm Sleuth."

The woman started, and then stood and glared like one suddenly stricken.

"You are Sleuth?"

"I am Sleuth."

"It's false!"

The detective worked a change, and the woman groaned and exclaimed:

"I am undone!"

"You are all right; but you must pass over the bonds."

"I have no bonds. You are away off there. I was too smart for you."

"Do not let us make any mistake, madame."

"What do you mean?"

There was deep meaning in the tones of the old detective's voice, and there was a terrible gleam in his eyes.

"Do you wish to know what I mean?"

"Yes."

"And what I am prepared to do?"

"Yes."

"I will search through every inch of clothing on your body right now and here. Madame, I mean business."

"A thousand curses on your head!"

"That's all right, as far as you are concerned, madame."

"I recall the curses."

"All right."

"I throw myself upon your mercy."

"That is better."

"Give me a few thousands."

The detective looked at the woman. He admired her. She was, in his estimation, the smartest woman he had ever met in his life.

"Kate," he said, "I am sorry for you."

"Thank you. Do you know my history?"

"Well, yes."

"I was a good and pure girl once."

"I do not doubt it."

"Let me tell you my story," said the woman.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The woman told her story, and it was the old, old tale. She had loved, and the man whom she married had corrupted her; and when once turned from a conscientious course, she had become, as is usual, even more desperate than the man who had lured her to a criminal career. When she had finished her narrative, Sleuth said:

"Why do you not reform?"

"Bah! I care not for reform. But, Sleuth, I am a woman of some sense."

"I know you are."

"A criminal life doesn't pay."

"It doesn't."

"I have succeeded several times as nearly as any one could."

"That is true."

"A criminal life brings misery, and trouble, and fear. There is no happiness, even in success."

"That is true."

"I will become an honest woman, simply because it doesn't pay to be dishonest. Give me a few thousands, and I will go away, and you will never hear of me again."

"How about your husband?"

"Hang him if you can. He deserves to be hung."

"Has he ever committed a murder?"

"No; he is too big a coward. He is a schemer, and, had it not been for me, he could not have carried through any of his schemes."

"How did you work the suicide scheme?"

"Easily enough. We knew a man who was dying. He was one of our gang. He had but a few days to live. We made an arrangement with his family that when he died we were to have the body. He was brought to our house. He died there. We intended to work the suicide act sooner. Had we done so, we would have been all right; but we were delayed. The man had been dead over twenty-nine hours when we worked the game. The doctor discovered the trick and gave us away; I know that."

"No, the doctor did not give you away."

And Sleuth told how he was led to suspect the truth.

The woman turned over to the detective three hundred thousand dollars in bonds.

"Where are the rest?" demanded the detective.

"Jim has them."

"Good enough. I will visit Jim, and if I recover the bonds from him, I will see that you are paid five thousand dollars, Kate, for I am satisfied you are prepared to become an honest woman."

"I am; and when I get the money, I will leave for Mexico. You will never see me again; but do not tell Jim where I intend to go."

"You need not fear Jim. He will go up for the rest of his life, sure."

"And that will free me from the marriage?"

"Yes; if you take the proper proceedings. Who, besides yourself and husband, is involved in this matter?"

"No one."

"How about Martin?"

"He is as innocent as you are. I took him into my confidence after the deed was done."

"Kate, I will come here in the morning and see you, and you need fear nothing. I will make good my word, and pay you the five thousand dollars."

"Sleuth's word is good enough for me any time."

"Yes, and your confidence will not be misplaced. I will find you here in the morning?"

"You will."

The detective went away. He proceeded direct to the house into which he had seen the woman enter when disguised as the helpless old creature. He found his man on guard.

"Well, how is it?"

"No one has come forth yet."

The detective had received certain information from Kate, and he entered the house. He ascended to the second floor, opened the door, and a man leaped to his feet. The next instant there came the report of a pistol, and the man fell bleeding to the floor. Sleuth was at his side.

"Damn you, fool!" exclaimed the detective. "Why did you do it?"

"Bah! I knew the game was up. I was waiting for you."

Sleuth ran down and summoned his aid, and the man was dispatched with a message. Within twenty minutes the chief of police of the city, a notary, and several others were at the side of the dying man. Davis was indeed a dying man. Later on his wife arrived, and there were half a dozen people in the room when, just at daylight, the man expired.

The detective had been cool, however, and ere he summoned help, he had secured the balance of the bonds.

Sleuth and the woman left the house together and proceeded to 200 — Street. On the way they exchanged but few words, but once in the house, the woman said:

"I did not believe he had the courage."

"Kate, you are responsible for his death."

"I am?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"You discouraged him."

"I told him the truth."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him the chances were against him. I asked him to divide with me, and said I would take care of myself, and he must take care of himself."

"That man believed you betrayed him."

"He knows better now, if he knows anything. I did all I could to carry the scheme through."

"You did."

"What will you do now?" asked the woman.

"There is no need to establish your husband's identity as Davis."

"Can you avoid it?"

"Yes."

"And save young Albert Gray?"

"Yes."

"That man is innocent."

"Yes; I have all the proofs."

"And you can arrange to have him honorably acquitted without proving the identity of Davis?"

"I can."

"Then let it be so."

Sleuth had arranged a story that Davis was really a native of Philadelphia, that his real name was not Davis. The detective had only given out his real name, and as the coroner had been summoned, and had taken his ante-mortem statement, the subsequent inquest the following day was but a mere formal matter.

Sleuth remained three days in Philadelphia, and, with the woman Kate, was one of the mourners at the funeral. It was a genuine suicide the last time. The man preferred death to a long term of imprisonment, which would probably have been for life.

CHAPTER XL.

On the fourth day after the suicide, Sleuth was prepared to return to New York, and at the depot he was met by Badger.

It was Badger who had been on the woman's trail, and who had let Sleuth know that he might look for her in Philadelphia. Kate went to her home. She was dressed in mourning, and looked but little like a woman who had led a criminal career. Sleuth and Badger proceeded to the former's home, and there the two detectives talked over the affair, and made all proper explanations.

Later on two gentlemen were ushered into the great detective's office, and to them was told a tale that caused them to follow it with running comments and ejaculations of wonder. The two gentlemen were the principal members of the firm that had been robbed, and the stolen bonds were returned to them, with other valuable papers. The four men discussed at length a plan for keeping the whole tragic ending of the great robbery a secret, and the district attorney and one of the judges of a criminal court were summoned, and the six men finally agreed upon a plan.

Upon the day following, the detective held a long interview with Kate Davis. She was known as Kate Davis, but her real name, as our readers have been informed, was a different one. Kate readily entered into the plan, and that same evening the old detective received a visitor—a lady who entered his office veiled.

"You may remove your veil, Miss Penham."

The girl removed her veil, and the face that was disclosed betrayed the mental anguish through which she had passed.

"Mary," said the detective, "it is all right."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"The innocence of Albert Gray has been established, and to-morrow he will be a free man."

The girl fell upon her knees, but the old detective at once raised to her feet.

"No, no!" he said. "No need to thank me. It is but justice that is to be done."

"Oh, sir, you are so noble, so good! And to-morrow I will bring you my money and pay you."

"No; it will cost you nothing. All the stolen plunder has been recovered, and I have been paid."

"Let me add what I have to the reward you have received."

The detective smiled kindly, and said:

"No; there is nothing to be paid. And now let me tell you something: Albert will be restored to his position, and that will establish to all the world the fact of his innocence."

"Oh, sir, that is so good—so good!"

"Yes; under all the circumstances it is grand. You will become his wife?"

"We are engaged to be married."

"When will you marry?"

"As soon as Albert is able to ask me to give up my position in the school."

"That means as soon as he is able to support you?"

"Yes, sir."

The answer came with a blush.

"The firm feel that they owe something to Albert for all that he has suffered."

"Oh, it is enough that they have done him justice at last."

"They will indemnify him."

"No need, sir."

"They will present him with a house and lot, and pay him a salary adequate to the maintenance of a home."

"Oh, sir, this is like a romance."

"Well, it is pretty considerable of a romance, take it all through," said the detective.

"Yes, sir, it is."

"All this the young man will owe to you."

"No, no!"

"He should never forget the debt of gratitude."

"He never will forget his debt of gratitude to you, sir; and never will I, either, sir."

"Say nothing to any one, and come here at this hour to-morrow."

"Can I not go and see Albert at the jail?"

"No; you will come here to-morrow. And now go away; I have business on hand."

The day following, the detective went to the jail. He had a long talk with Albert Gray. He explained everything to the young man, and, as can well be imagined, he had a happy listener.

"You will observe one fact," said Sleuth.

"You owe all this to Mary Penham."

"I recognize the fact, sir."

"And you will never forget it?"

"Never."

"You are a very lucky young man."

"Yes, sir, in having come out of this affair when all looked so black and hopeless."

"I do not mean in that way."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean you are a lucky man to have won the love of such a true and noble girl as Mary Penham."

"I fully realize that, sir."

"You think you do?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, never forget it, for I repeat, had it not been for her, you would have been a ruined man."

"I fully realize it."

"And you will always bear it in mind?"

"I will, sir."

Later on the young man was brought before the judge, who had been summoned with the district attorney to the detective's home. An affidavit was read from the woman known as Kate Davis, the wife of the suicide, James Davis, and she surrendered all the bonds and what there was of the plunder. Young Gray was formally discharged—honorably discharged; and in the court the parties who had been robbed announced their satisfaction, and also the fact that, to prove their belief in his innocence, he should be restored to their employ.

The matter was legally closed, and Albert was a free man, and his honor was restored to him. He left the court-room between Badger and Old Sleuth, the men whose wonderful skill had led to the proof of his innocence.

At the time named, the fair girl, Mary Penham, arrived at Sleuth's house, and the detective said:

"You read the evening papers?"

"I did, sir."

"Then you know all about it?"

With tears streaming down her face, she answered:

"I do. But where is Albert?"

"Go into the parlor," said Sleuth.

The girl went into the parlor, and what passed shall be the secret of those most concerned.

Six months following the incidents we have narrated, a marriage occurred, and the papers contained a simple announcement, and we will only add that Sleuth, Badger & Co. attended the wedding.

THE END.

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